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Bringing Up John

"How Can I Teach My Children So That
Their Religious Faith Will Stand
The Tests of After Years?"

A Book for Mothers and Other
Teachers of Boys and Girls

By

EDWARD LEIGH PELL

*Author of "Our Troublesome Religious
Questions," etc.*

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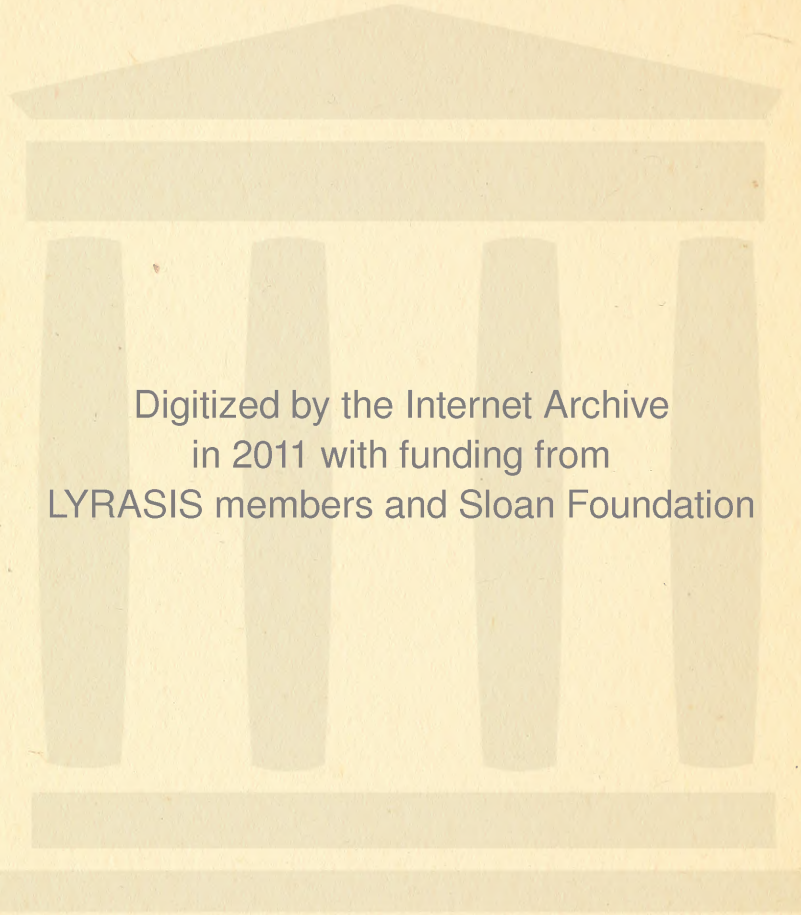
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Foreword

A GENERATION or two ago the problem of teaching a child the fundamental truths of life was a very simple one. Mothers had their worries then as now, but the question of what to teach was not one of them: all they had to do was to recall what they had been taught in their own childhood and teach that. If much of their instruction would not bear inspection, as often happened to be the case, it was not a very serious matter: in those simple days the average child would grow up and go through life without ever coming to a light where he would have a chance to inspect it.

But those simple days have passed, and with them all our simple problems; and in their place we have—the modern criticism! And that, so far as the problem before us is concerned, has changed everything. To-day when a boy goes to college he finds himself in the fierce glare of a new light—a most unsanctified, persistent light that searches him through and through and does not balk even at the most sacred recesses of his soul. And in that light he makes the most appalling discovery of his life. He discovers that his mother—bless her heart!—has been teaching him things that were

not true. She has taught him ideas of God that are as absurd as the wildest fancies of mythology. She has taught him ideas of prayer that look as if they had floated over from pagan India. In that fierce light some of her teachings appear so foolish that he blushes at the thought of being caught with them, and he almost falls over himself in his feverish haste to get rid of them.

It would not be so bad but for the fact that haste is always bad. In his fever to cast out the chaff, John overlooks the wheat that is scattered through it, and when it is all over it will be a miracle if the boy's mind is not found to be as empty of all religious truth as it is likely to be of such kindred essentials as reverence and common sense.

Thousands of boys and girls at college to-day are casting away their religious faith, not because the light that shines in the modern college shows the teachings of Christianity to be untrue, but simply because their mothers did not teach them the truth. Modern criticism has yet to affect a single teaching of Christ, but it is merciless in revealing the absurdity of some things that are taught in the name of Christ, and it is the sudden exposure of these things to the light of criticism at college, more than anything else, that is playing such havoc with the religious faith of our young people of to-day. The boy who has the privilege of going to college fortified with the fundamental truths of Christianity, sanely taught by an intelligent mother who

was too conscientious to teach him wrong the first time, under promise to herself to teach him better when he should be old enough to understand better—the boy who has this rare privilege may not, and in all probability will not go through college without a struggle with doubt, but he is likely to bring back home with his sheepskin every fundamental religious truth that his mother taught him. He will not come back believing some things which other religious teachers have taught him, but that is another matter.

We are often told nowadays that the only hope for Christianity in America is a revival of moral courage that will make the Church brave enough to run its creed through a sifter. The Church must separate the wheat from the chaff and bravely set a match to the chaff! But the real trouble lies deeper. The real trouble is not in the creed of the Church, which few people ever think about, but in the religious instruction which our children are getting at home. Mothers who would never think of setting a dinner before anybody's little child without carefully inspecting it, are still setting before their own children the teachings which they received in their own childhood without so much as glancing at them. They are still teaching John about a God who loves little boys only when they are good. They are still teaching him that if he wants anything, all he has to do is to ask God for it in Jesus' name and believe that he is going to

get it. They teach such things, not because they believe them, but partly because they are not clear as to just what is the truth, and partly because they expect to teach their children better when they are old enough to understand better. And nurses, as everybody knows, are still holding up terrifying heathenish pictures of God before little children to make them behave. The one pressing need of American Christianity to-day is not a church brave enough to run its creed through a sifter, but Christian mothers who will take the time to sift out the religious ideas which they have brought up from their childhood, and separate what Christ actually taught from the vast mass of chaff that has come to them, partly from their heathen ancestors of a thousand years ago, partly from half-heathen nurses, and partly from teachers who were handicapped by a like pagan inheritance.

In the following pages I have tried to do a little of this sifting—enough to show those who have never tried it that it is not such a difficult matter after all to distinguish between chaff and wheat,—and also to offer to the mother who is brave enough to take up this pressing task, some suggestions that may aid her in her efforts to equip young John with the fundamentals of a real Christian faith—a faith that will stand the fierce light of his college days, and the stern, practical tests of the years to follow.

E. L. P.

Richmond, Va.

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I

A QUESTION OF ATMOSPHERE

THE first thing a mother makes for her child after he is born is an atmosphere. This wonderful garment is of so fine a texture that it cannot be seen with the naked eye; yet it is the most substantial thing she ever makes for him. And it is the most important. It is the most important not only because it is going to be his most intimate garment throughout his childhood, but because the wearing of it is going to affect his whole subsequent life.

This means of course that the weaving of this most delicate but most real of all maternal creations is a very serious matter. It is all the more serious because it begins before the mother is conscious of it, and because it is going on to the end whether she will or no.

It is a most amazing piece of work and I don't pretend to know how it is done. Part of the material I know comes out of the mother's head and part out of her heart; but which of these two furnishes the warp and which the woof I have never been able to guess. I only know that some-

thing must come from both: the atmosphere that is woven out of either alone is always a failure.

To make the right sort of atmosphere for little John's spirit to breathe and grow in one must actually think as well as feel. And one must direct one's thoughts. One must think of the things that are as pure as the atmosphere one wants to create. For this fortunately we have an ideal program: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." This program of course requires time, and just here I am aware that I have run against a snag. What young mother ever has the time to think?

The snag is not in the question, but in the fact that it is never asked as a question. It is only stated as a finality, and when a young mother states a thing as a finality there is a finality. At any rate, you are conscious of having run against something very hard and unyielding. Still one might venture to ask a simple question. One might ask what a young mother who insists that she has no time to think is usually doing. One might even venture to ask if she is not thinking anyway. Really I do not know anybody who does more thinking than a young mother. The moment her strength begins to return she begins to think, and

heaven only knows when or where she will end. Usually the trouble is not that she has no time to think, but that she has no one to tell her what to think about. How often it happens that she thinks of everything except the things she ought to think about. How often she thinks of her worries; of the things that go wrong; of the things that can drive out from even a mother's mind and heart and life all the blessed things of the spirit, including the Great Spirit Himself. Sometimes she thinks of the things that vex and anger and turn all the milk of human kindness in her soul to clabber. Sometimes she thinks of things that take the angel out of her eyes, that put all sorts of ugly things in the angel's place for baby to look at—things that bring great frightful clouds down upon her beautiful brow and make havoc of the sweet things that have been playing about the mouth for baby to feed upon.

And all the while her thoughts are filling the atmosphere around her with a deadly poison—the kind of poison that the Hater of Mothers uses to kill babies' souls.

But I see I have come back to that snag again. What do I know about a mother's time? What do I know about what mothers have to do? That, surely is final: what indeed do I know about what mothers have to do? Who but a mother knows what mothers have to do? However, this is only a matter of fact, and we are not particularly con-

cerned just now about mere matters of fact. Just now we are concerned about the truth; and this indisputable fact that I do not know what mothers have to do does not affect the truth of what I am trying to say. Time or no time, if little John is going to learn the truth about God and the things of God—the truth that will hold good through the years to come—you have got to wrap him about with a certain spiritual atmosphere, and to produce this atmosphere you must turn your mind and heart persistently to the things of the spirit—the things that are true and pure and lovely and of good report. This is as true as an axiom, and nothing—not even my cheerfully admitted ignorance of what mothers have to do—can ever alter it.

Mothers are like some other earnest people one knows; when they haven't the time they need for the thing that must be done they make it. And I have no doubt that you are already making at least a part of the time that you need for the supreme task of providing for little John the atmosphere which his spirit demands. No doubt you are already feeding your own mind and heart upon the things that are true and pure and lovely and of good report, and if you persist it will not be long before the things of the spirit, out of which the atmosphere of the spirit is made, will begin to exude from every pore of your being. They will come from your eyes, your lips, your voice, your

finger tips, and as they come you will unconsciously weave them into a garment that will envelop little John's spirit as intimately as those wonderful little things that you made for him before he was born envelop his body. And by and by when his little mind has opened up far enough for you to begin your direct, systematic teaching about the things of the spirit, you will be amazed to see how naturally and easily he will grasp the truths that are placed before him. You will wonder if some kind angel had not whispered to him little hints of what you were going to impart to him.

It is not a difficult task—this making of an atmosphere for John's spirit—and just now I can think of but one rule that you will really need to remember, and that is to associate your thoughts of the things of the spirit with John. Weave your thoughts of God with John and your thoughts of John with God. If you have found it hard to fix your mind upon the things of the spirit by themselves, you will be amazed to see how easy and how delightful it is to think of them in connection with John—as when you think of God as John's Father, and dream of the day when you will take him by the hand and lead him to his Father, that he may know Him and love Him and walk with Him forever.

Thinking of the things of the spirit in association with John will not only make the things of the

spirit more real to you, but it will make John's spirit more real to you. It will not only give you a clearer and more precious vision of God, but it will give you a clearer and more precious vision of John. Doubtless you are acquainted with young mothers who think of their babies simply as splendid animals. The only distinction they make between a baby and a pet dog is that a baby is a more precious bundle of flesh than a dog. This is the inevitable result of thinking of one's baby only in connection with material things. The mother who thinks of her baby as an animal with only material needs may succeed in making an excellent atmosphere for little dogs and little human animals to thrive in, but she will never make an atmosphere that her child's spirit can breathe, or through which he can see or hear the voice of the Father of spirits. You simply cannot lead a child to see or hear God in such an atmosphere. You cannot reach a child's spirit in such an atmosphere: you can only reach the little human animal that encloses his spirit. And you can no more lead a little human animal to God than you can lead a pet dog to God. If you want John to get acquainted with the Father you must learn to think of him, not as a splendid little animal, but as a glorious spirit; and to do this you must form the habit of thinking of him in association with the Father of spirits.

II

MAKING A BEGINNING

NEXT to a bad atmosphere the most serious hindrance to the religious teaching of a little child at home is procrastination. Many a young mother who starts out with so much religious enthusiasm that you would not be surprised to find her trying to teach her child about God before he is a month old, puts it off until his little mind is so full of other things that she despairs of finding a place in it for God.

Of course John's little brain must begin to open up before you can put anything into it, but it does not take a thoughtful young mother long to discover that the brain does not cut as big a figure in the education of a child as most people imagine. The very best things that come to us never come through purely intellectual processes. Some of the priceless treasures of the heart seem to reach us without passing through intellectual channels at all. Some seem to reach us through that mysterious nebulosity around the brain which we call intuition. Some seem to reach us through no medium we have been able to discover other than

a spiritual atmosphere. Certainly they do not come to us through the reason. Nothing that is of the spirit is reasoned out. Love was not reasoned out. How could it be?—it is the most unreasonable thing in the world.

I have received messages from music, from pictures, from beautiful sunsets, which clearly did not come to me through my reason. I have read poems which my intellect utterly failed to grasp, yet I was conscious that I was getting something very precious from them—something more than could come from rhythm or from the beauty of the printed page. I am sure that the Shepherd Psalm said beautiful things to my spirit long before I knew the meaning of a single sentence in it. And who that has brought up children does not know that long before a child is old enough to clearly grasp the meaning of a sentence read to him, he is catching little glimmerings of light and precious little wireless messages for his soul from a word here and a word there, as well as from his mother's voice, and from her eyes, into which he is wistfully gazing while she reads.

As soon as little John is old enough to learn anything I would begin to teach him about God. That is, I would set about the task of making him acquainted with God. In this task, as in all other first efforts to teach little children, one should make the most of the child's sense of rhythm. This is one of the most primitive of all senses,

after the five physical senses, and one of the first to develop. Babies fall under the power of rhythm long before they are conscious of it, as when they are soothed to sleep by rhythmical rocking. Now that up-to-date mothers no longer rock their babies to sleep, the sense of rhythm may not develop as early as it used to, but only recently I noticed that a rhyme or jingle will awaken pleasurable sensations in a baby little more than two years old. Perhaps you have noticed that mothers who are gifted in baby talk are always full of rhythm. Not only their voices but their movements in playing with a baby are rhythmical. The mother who is rhythmical enough to appeal to her baby's sense of rhythm finds her way into a baby's mind far ahead of the mother who is unrhythmical. If you will recite three or four prose sentences to little John and then follow with a bit of rhyme, you will see his little face light up over the rhyme in a way that will make you wonder why a mother should ever spend her time trying to convey ideas to her baby through prose when nearly all the ideas she wants to convey may be found in familiar verse. If it is much easier to convey such ideas as love and kindness through rhythm than through prose, surely it is easier to convey ideas of the God of love and kindness through bits of beautiful verse or rhythmical sentences from the Bible, than through our archaic theological formulas, most of which seem to have emanated from the brains of

men who did not believe that little children had any mental rights which their elders were bound to respect. Theological formulas may be good things to memorize for after years, but they don't give little children ideas of God.

Every day I would recite to little John bits of beautiful verse or rhythmical bits from the Bible containing the name of God. At the beginning I should use selections containing the name *God*, or *Lord*. I am aware that some pedagogical authorities insist that the first name to be taught should be *Father*, but I question the wisdom of teaching a child about the Father until he is in some degree prepared to distinguish between his Heavenly Father and his earthly father. The idea of God as a being infinitely above all beings that we can see, even one's own mother or father, should be thoroughly grounded first; then the child will be prepared for the truth that this higher being is a higher father. If the idea of Father is taught at the beginning it will result in confusion, and when the mother undertakes to separate the Father from the *father* in the child's mind and to raise the Father to the throne of the child's heart as God, she is likely to find herself in a sea of troubles.

As I have said, it is not necessary at the beginning that the child should grasp the recited passages with his mind, and I have mentioned the Shepherd Psalm as a case in point. No little child

can grasp this psalm with his mind; nevertheless you can do wonders with it if you will fill and thrill your own heart with it before you begin to recite it. The words themselves will not tell little John of God's loving care, but something of the message which those words have carried to your own heart may one day reach him through your eyes and voice and loving embrace while you are reciting it. This is not fanciful, as you will find if you will persist in reciting it day after day. A little child's mind, as every mother knows, is whetted rather than dulled by repetition, and even after you have repeated this psalm many days you can safely return to it after you have given him something else. The same may be said of the Beatitudes and several other familiar Biblical selections which we usually associate with childhood.

These selections should be recited, not read, and the mother should have her child in her lap and should look straight into his face. And the recitation should be a sacred service. There should be perfect quiet and nothing of what we call the secular should be allowed to break into the solemn moments. In all these efforts to convey ideas of God the child must be made to realize that you are telling him about something different, something higher and better. The name of God should be uttered reverently, and with a pause before and after, and the selections should not be sandwiched between jingles or other baby nonsense. Of course

one must learn how to be serious without being doleful, and how to escape dolefulness without running to the extreme of lightness. Really there is no use in trying to convey to a little child true ideas of God at all if the mother is going to speak of God in the same tone of voice that she would speak of a jolly time. A child is not going to become conscious of God so long as his mother's talk does not clearly distinguish God from his playthings—so long as he is not made to see that God is something infinitely above his playthings. And this cannot be done unless, when she comes to speak of God, she drops the lightness with which she has been speaking of playthings and falls sincerely into the tones, attitudes and gestures of a true worshiper of God.

It is important, however, that this idea of God as something different should never be taught alone. An expression of awe frightens a child unless it is accompanied by love, and if little John is to be drawn toward God and not frightened away from Him, your voice, attitudes and gestures, while expressing your reverence for God, should also be made to express your love for Him.

Of course, this is a very critical period in a mother's experience, and many mothers can hardly do anything for trembling. They are afraid that little John will get into his mind some of those horrible pictures of God which came to them when they were children. But there is no danger that

any of these horrible pictures will come to him if he has been given the proper atmosphere for his spirit, unless he is allowed to wander out of that atmosphere into that of some half-pagan nurse. He will never conceive of God as a terrible thing to be frightened at—as an Awful Eye away up in the sky, as a Monster Policeman peeping down through the stars to catch little children in some badness, as a Great Giant riding upon the clouds and now and then scratching great matches against the sky, and rolling big balls up and down in heaven to frighten little children who are nervous, or as a Cruel Avenger who is always doing horrible things to get even with people who go fishing on Sunday.

I know that these horrible pictures came to me when I was a child in spite of my mother's care to provide the proper atmosphere; but that was because she had so many children that she had to have a nurse. And sometimes the nurse was quite human. Sometimes she was more concerned about her own present comfort than my future good, and she would yield to the temptation to exploit God for her peace of mind. She would make frightful pictures of God to scare me into being good. And when I wandered away from my mother's atmosphere into her atmosphere I could see those pictures everywhere. Sometimes when I was not good I would look up at the sky and the sight of that Awful Eye would send me flying indoors. Sometimes at night it would look down upon me

so fiercely that I would hide under the cover. At least so it seems to me now. In recalling one's childhood one cannot always be sure whether he is recalling what actually occurred, or what he afterwards imagined or was told, but it seems to me now that those horrible pictures frightened me so terribly that I sometimes found myself hating God. Sometimes my mother would tell me beautiful stories of Jesus and I would try to like God, but afterwards when I went out with the nurse and disobeyed her, she would tell me about God sending the bears to eat up bad children, and then she would tell me that the Bad Man would get me if I didn't watch out. It was no use trying: I just couldn't like God.

There are thousands of big, strong, fine men in America to-day—almost as big and strong and fine as little John is going to be—who have never really believed in God since they grew up, because of the religious teaching they got when they were little children, and because of the atmosphere in which it came to them. I shall have nothing to say about this nurse question,—I have learned that in matters of this sort discretion is the better part of valour,—but if you have a nurse I hope you will be careful at the close of each day to take little John's mind in your hands and squeeze it out as you would squeeze a sponge until you have cleared it of every evil thing that has found its way into it during the day.

III

A MOTHER'S BIGGEST BLUNDER

I HAVE said that I am not going to venture upon the nurse question, but I should like to say in passing that it is one thing to take a mother's place and another thing to fill it. An orphan asylum takes a mother's place, but it doesn't fill it. So with a nurse. And yet one must be fair. If nurses are poor substitutes for mothers, one must admit that there are mothers who are poor substitutes for nurses. When I recall the very worst thing a nurse ever taught me I am reminded that millions of mothers, even in this age of light, have taught the very same thing. Millions of mothers are to-day teaching their children that God does not love little children when they are bad. And nothing worse than that ever came from a nurse's lips. All the horrible pictures of God that half-pagan nurses have made to scare little children into being good are as nothing compared with this thoughtless teaching of impatient mothers that God does not love little children when they are bad. God doesn't love us when we are bad! Heavens! If that is true, then in the name of common sense what is to become of us? Why,

everything—everything that is worth while—all our hopes, our peace, our happiness, our religion, all the spiritual side of our life and our civilization—everything rests upon the belief that our God is a God who does love us when we are bad! Why, that was why God sent His Son into the world. That is what the Gospel is for—to teach us that God does love us when we are bad. That is the thing that makes the Gospel a message of hope. That is what causes bowed men to fling aside their tears and look up. That is the thing that has encouraged fallen humanity to make a new start. That is the thing that draws men to Christ. If we cannot say to the world that God does not love us when we are bad, what's the use of saying anything?

Suppose little John should grow up with the idea that his mother loves him only when he is good. What would your love be worth to him? What could it do for him? How much power would it have to restrain him from evil? And how much would he care for it? Why should he care for it? Anybody can love him when he is good. Anybody on the street can do that. What little John wants and what he must have is somebody who will love him when he is bad. That's what a mother is for—somebody who can love a boy when he is bad. If a mother cannot do that she is no mother at all. It isn't your beauty that makes you a mother. The memory of your beauty

is not going to inspire or restrain little John in the after years. Nor is it your admiration for him when he is good that is going to count. The thing that is going to count in the after years is the fact that you loved him when he was bad.

All this goes without saying, and not for the world would you tell little John that you do not love him when he is bad. You want him to know that you love him with a mother's love—a love that will flow on without ceasing regardless of what he may do; a love that is forever inexhaustible. You want him to know that if in the coming years he should crush your heart, that heart would still yearn for him; that if he should wander away from you to the ends of the earth, and drink the cup of iniquity to the dregs, your love would remain unchanged, and that if he should come back he would find you waiting for him at the door and ready to strain him to your heart as if he were as clean and sweet as he was the day he went away.

That is the only love that saves and that is the love that God has for little John. And if John is to be saved he must know it. He must know of the love that saves.

Now and then a boy who has been playing the prodigal comes to his senses and his heart begins to ache with an unutterable yearning for home. And when he begins to think of home he begins to think of his mother. And his first thought of his mother is of her love for him. If he remembers her love

as a love that never changed, whatever the circumstances—a love that never left her eyes even when she was punishing him—he will start home, and he will go as fast as he can travel. But if his mother is dead and he remembers his father as a hard, cold man who was always warning him that if he didn't behave he would disown him, he will not go back home. Very likely he will give vent to the bitterness welling up in his heart by jerking himself round to the opposite direction.

Have I made it plain? I cannot conceive of a mother making a greater mistake than when she teaches her child to think of God as a Father whose love for His children depends upon how they behave. It is bad enough for a boy to wander away from God; but it is worse, far worse, for a mother to teach her boy ideas of God which, if he should wander away from God, will forever keep him from coming back.

But are there not other ways of looking at the matter? Unquestionably. There are mothers whose consciences permit them "to do evil that good may come," and who would have us remember that whether it is true or not, the reminder that God does not love little children when they are bad often makes them behave when nothing else will. And there are other mothers who are really afraid that teaching little Johnny that God loves him whether he is good or bad would encourage him to be bad. But we might as well face the

truth. The fact that there are other ways of looking at the matter does not affect the truth that if we want little Johnny to get acquainted with the true God we must teach him about the God of Truth, and that to do that we must teach the truth, whatever may be the consequences.

What then? If to-day you are tempted to say to little John, "O Johnny, that is naughty and God doesn't love naughty boys," put the temptation aside and tell him the truth. Say to him, "Don't you know God loves you?—and God doesn't want you to do that?" And to-night when you have tucked him in bed talk to him a little while about God's love. Tell him that God so loves us that He can't help loving us even when we are bad; and tell him a story that will show him how the heart of Jesus went out with tenderness toward horribly bad people whom everybody else despised—not indeed because they were bad, but in spite of their badness.

IV.

WHY I DISLIKED GOD

PERHAPS I cannot better prepare the way for what I wish to say concerning the teaching of true ideas of God than by recalling something further of my experiences with the terrifying pictures of God which haunted my early life. As I have said, in recalling one's childhood one cannot always be sure whether one is recalling what actually occurred or what he afterwards imagined or heard from others; but if, as is probable, the incidents I shall here set down have little basis in fact, they are none the less true to life.

I have before me at this moment a vision of an old black mammy. Frankly I am not sure that this old mammy as I now see her ever existed. Perhaps the picture is a composite of several old black mammies whom I have known, or imagined I have known, from time to time. But just now I can hear her talking to me. I was a sickly child and my heart would often flutter like a bird, and it seemed to me I was always afraid. I was always imagining that something terrible was going to happen. One day I tried to explain to mammy how I felt (probably I am quoting from my imagination rather than from my memory), and mammy said:

“ Bless yo’ heart, honey chile, don’t you know you’s jes’ restin’ in the holler of God’s han’, jes’ so? ” And she held out her big fat hand and drew her fingers over as if she were holding a little bird. And then she added: “ You’s jes’ lak dat little bird I picked up in de garden yestiddy. It was all er flutterin’, en I sez: ‘ What makes you so skeered? Don’t yer know I ain’t er gwine to harm yer? ’ ”

I made no reply, for I was thinking what an awful thing it would be to be in the hand of God. If she had only said Jesus I am sure I should have been happy. I loved Jesus because He was so gentle and kind, like mammy. Mammy was always telling me about how He went about every day helping people, and how He loved little children and loved to take them up in His arms and bless them. But I did not love God because He was above everybody and was so awful. Sometimes mammy would see a boy doing something bad and she would grow very solemn and talk to me about the great and awful God who sits on His great white throne looking down upon people and keeping account of all their wicked deeds. “ En He never forgits, honey chile,” she would say, shaking her head earnestly. “ When judgment day comes en dat bad boy is took up dar befo’ dat great white throne, de Lawd’s gwine ter ’member everything dat boy done in dis worl’; en ef he don’t quit ’is meanness, when dat day come de Al-

mighty's gwine ter say to His angels: 'Take dat bad boy outen my sight; I don't want ter see him no mo';' en dey'll bring a great big chain en tie him han' and foots, en den dey'll pick him up en fro' 'im over de wall en he'll go right straight down ter de bad place. En de bad man will git him, en burn 'im, en keep on burnin' 'im forever en forever. En dar'll be weepin' en wailin' en gnashin' o' teef. En he may cry fur his mammy en his daddy, en he may pray ter de Lawd Hisse'f much ez he pleases, but he ain't never gwine ter git out dar agin."

It was awful. Every time mammy would talk that way I would feel bad inside, and if God had come by I would not have spoken to Him. I almost—but I must not tell what I thought of God. I would not tell mammy.

Up on the next block was a very hard man. Everybody called him a hard man. One day his little boy disobeyed him and he locked him up in a room by himself and kept him there all day and all that night and would not give him anything but bread and water. And that night the little boy was terribly frightened because he had to stay in the dark, and his mother went to his father and begged and cried, but he would not let the little boy out. And his sister went to him and begged and cried but it was no use. And then a kind lady living next door came and talked to him, and he thanked her and said he preferred to manage his

own family affairs without the aid of his neighbours. And the little boy stayed in that dark room alone all night. I never could think of that man without feeling bad inside, and it was the same feeling that I had when mammy would talk about what God would do to bad little boys. Sometimes mammy would talk about the All-seeing Eye and then when I looked up into the sky I could not see God at all, but only a great eye, a thousand times bigger than my eyes, and it would look straight down at me. Sometimes I thought a sharp sword would come out of it and shoot right down into my heart. But that was when I had been doing wrong. Sometimes I felt that I had a grudge against God because of that Eye. I did not think He ought to watch me like a policeman. I would have felt insulted if a policeman had watched me, for mammy had told me that policemen watched only bad boys.

Every Sunday afternoon when mother was strong enough she would read to us children a Bible story and talk to us a long time about God and Jesus and the angels and about being good. She told many beautiful stories and we were all very glad for Sunday afternoon to come because of the stories and because of the cake and hickory-nuts and apples that she always brought out of the pantry and gave us when the stories were over. But I didn't like Sunday mornings, because we had to go to church and keep our feet very still while

the preacher was preaching and saying awful things about the wrath of God. How often I found myself wishing that God was like Jesus!

One day I said so to the quiet lady, and she said:

“Why, my boy, Jesus is the same as God.”

“No, ma’am,” I said; “He can’t be; for Jesus loves everybody and God is angry with the wicked every day.”

I liked pretty love stories, but I always hated to hear “hate” stories. It would make me unhappy for a whole day to hear about hating or fighting. That was one reason why I did not like God. When I went to church they would often sing something about teaching our fingers to fight, and the preacher would talk about the God of battles and tell us that God wanted us to be good soldiers and to fight the good fight of faith. I could not understand why God wanted to have another war.

By and by mammy died. Such a strange feeling I had when they told me she had gone up to heaven! It was as if she had led me to a strange house as night was coming on, and without kissing me or saying a word had suddenly vanished through the door and left me standing alone. And the door had slammed behind her and I could see that it was locked and that the key was gone and that it would never be opened again. For many weeks after that I would go out to the front porch every evening at sunset and sit on the steps and watch for mammy in the sky. Sometimes I

thought I saw her face and something inside of me fluttered. And every time I saw that face something inside of me would say that she was coming back and something else would say that she would never return. It was all so cruel. I felt worse when I thought of her and God. I could not understand how mammy could get along with God. She always had a poor opinion of people who put themselves above other people, and I was afraid she would say something to God about His proud ways and He would not like it. I knew Jesus would love her, but I felt uneasy when I thought of God.

One day I remembered that mammy never seemed afraid of God, and I began to wonder if I had not made a mistake; and then I remembered what the quiet lady had said about Jesus and God being the same. But the next moment I thought of that great white throne and that great man with a terrible frown sitting upon it and the bad little boy standing before Him, and I knew that God and Jesus could not be the same. Still I was troubled, for it seemed to me that Jesus ought to be God because He did everything and even made the little dead girl come to life again. Several long years passed before I ceased to worry over it. At last one day when I was quite a big boy the thought came to me that the terrible God whom mammy had pictured to me whenever she saw a big boy doing wrong was not her God at all, but only a

picture which had somehow found its way into her mind. I was sure that she could not have made it herself—no one with her great loving heart could have made it—and I at length concluded that it had come to her in listening to sermons on the wrath of God, of which there was a superabundance in her day. It was plain that she did not worship such a God; no power could have made her bow down to a being who spent his time watching little children to catch them in some meanness. Her God, I said to myself, had to be a God who loved little children, and I recalled that with the exception of that terrible picture all her talk about God was just like her talk about Jesus, and that like the quiet lady she often talked about Jesus as if he were the same as God.

But what a world of trouble that terrible picture gave me before I ever succeeded in getting it out of my mind! If it had not been for the fact that I could not separate God and heaven and Jesus from my father and mammy I am sure I would have grown up to hate God with all my heart. For it seemed to me that God stood for everything that was terrible. He was to blame for the things that made my mother cry. One day a telegram came and when my mother read it she grew as white as a sheet and fell upon the floor. Mammy put her to bed and sent for the doctor and the next morning my father said in his prayer that God did it. God made my Uncle Joe die and my mother

cry. God knew best, he said, and we must kiss the rod that was laid upon us. I could not understand why father did not think hard of God for causing so much trouble. But he never did. Little baby brother died and father said in his prayer that God did it and he was not angry a bit. And then, too, God was to blame for all the terrible things that frightened me. Mother said that if I were well I would not be nervous and would not be so easily frightened; but I could not see why that should let God off. Surely He knew I was nervous. It seemed to me He delighted in frightening me. He would scratch great matches across the sky at night—that was what made the lightning, mammy said—and He would roll great balls up and down the floor in heaven, and sometimes the balls would tumble down on the floor suddenly and make me almost jump out of my skin. It was horrible. And one day there was a terrible storm that made me sick, it was so bad, and mother said that God was in the storm. And yet she insisted that God was good.

But then there were the beautiful sunsets which God painted in the sky, and there were the beautiful birds which He made, and there was my mother and mammy and all the rest. And He made them all. How could He be bad if He made my mother? God was a great puzzle. I thought I would never understand Him.

V

GETTING AT THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

I HAVE dwelt upon my own experience (or what I have imagined to be my experience) not because it is unusual, but because it is not unusual. Indeed, it is so common that we rarely come upon a wreck of religious faith that cannot be partly traced to it. I am aware that we do not usually place the blame for men's religious lapses or collapses upon their early training. Usually we blame the college. When a boy goes off to college and comes back without any religious faith we invariably put the blame upon the college. Of course it is the college. The college has ruined many a young man and Tom is ruined; *ergo* the college is to blame. What could be plainer?

Unquestionably some colleges breed storms before which our young men's temples of faith go down like the house that was built upon the sand. Still I am not sure that we are quite sincere in our reasoning about this matter. That is to say, I am not sure that we are so anxious to settle the blame upon the college as we are to keep it from being settled upon ourselves. I fear that we sometimes reason as does Jones, the contractor, who insists that all the blame for the collapse of the new town

hall rests upon that terrible September storm. No doubt Jones believes that the September storm did it, but we never hear him argue the matter that we don't find ourselves wondering just what sort of material went into those foundations.

Of course the weak point in Jones's argument lies in its failure to account for the buildings that did not fall. And that is the weak point in our reasoning about Tom; it doesn't explain why the storm that wrecked Tom's temple of faith should have left a hundred other temples intact. True, both phenomena might be attributed to the eccentricities of storms; but the trouble did not lie in the storm but in the foundations.

Every one knows that the town hall collapsed because it was built wrong from the start, and if we, the architects and builders of our young people's temples of faith, would go back and carefully examine our work, we might discover that our Tom's temple collapsed for the same reason. No doubt the storm that overtook Tom at college was the immediate cause, but we might find that far back of the storm, far back in Tom's early childhood, we had carelessly put into the foundations of his temple a great deal of defective material—material which served the immediate purpose well enough, but was no more fit to stand the test of time than the flimsiest stuff that went into the foundations of the town hall that Jones built. That is what a great many parents and teachers

are doing to-day; they are putting into their children's minds a vast amount of flimsy stuff that will not stand the test of time. True, their intentions are better than Jones's; they really intend to teach their children better when they are old enough to find out that what they have been taught is not exactly true; but that does not help matters. They are not going to teach them better, and besides, if they should try, it would be too late. When a boy opens his eyes at college in a sudden blaze of light and with one swift glance back at the past discovers that the teachers of his childhood taught him pious lies, it is a great deal too late.

If we want our children to stand firm in the faith through all the vicissitudes of life we must see that they are provided with a firm faith to stand upon, and this means that they must be taught right from the start. We must ask of everything we would teach them, not whether it will do, but whether it is true; not whether it will do for to-day, but whether it will hold good when our children are older; whether it will stand the test of time—of the light that time is likely to bring and of the storms that it is sure to bring.

Let us think again about the ideas we have been teaching our children about God. I have dwelt at length upon those horrible nursery pictures of God which cause so many to turn their backs upon religion in after life. But there are others. For example, there is the pious mother's fond pictures

of the loving care of God. Little John is taught that he is as a little bird in a great loving hand that closes over him gently whenever anything approaches that can hurt him. Certainly that is a very beautiful picture of Providence. But with that picture before his eyes, John is growing up with the idea that if he will trust God nothing will ever be allowed to hurt him. God will keep the bees from stinging him. God will keep him from having the toothache. God will not let him get sick, and God will not let his mother die.

Of course we must teach John that the Father protects His loving children. But we must teach him the truth. We must teach him that God is a wise and loving father, and not an indulgent parent. We must teach him that God is a protector of children, not a spoiler of children. He will protect us but He is not going to spoil us. He will protect us, but He is not going to shield us from every change of temperature, from the winter's sleet or the summer's heat, or from the toothaches and headaches to which our own imprudences have exposed us. God has nowhere promised to shield us from the thousand-and-one petty annoyances of life from which we are always praying to be delivered, and without which we would have nothing, on the human side, to develop our strength, our courage, or our patience. God did not shield the children of Israel from the discomforts and trials of their night journey across

the sandy bed of the sea, but He protected them. He stood between them and their enemies. He did not carry them to the promised land on flowery beds of ease; He made them walk every step of the way; but He protected them on the way. God put us here in the world that we might grow up hardy plants—fruit-bearing trees that are the better for the cold and heat and the March winds that whistle through their branches—not delicate hothouse plants that must be forever waited on, and for all one's waiting bring forth nothing but flowers. We must get rid of the morbid, invalid ideas of Providence which lurk in our minds. Some of us think that if God loves us it would hurt Him to see one of our fingers bleed. We are always going to Him like babies crying to Him about our sleepless nights and our mosquito bites that have come to us by our own improvidence. We are always praying for the comfort of our bodies, as if the body was the chief thing. God is infinite in compassion, and we may be sure He does not want to see any of His children suffer, but He is concerned about us rather than about our mere visible selves—our bodies which are the mere clothing of our inner selves. A father does not want to see his daughter's fine new dress torn, but if it should catch fire he would not hesitate to tear it to shreds to save his daughter's life. So God does not want to see our bodies hurt, but He is willing that they should suffer anything and everything

for the sake of our souls. And so while God may often protect our clothes, our property, our bodies—the external things which surround our real selves—He will not hesitate to let them all go rather than that the real self, the soul, should suffer.

If we want to teach little John the truth about God we must renounce once for all this strangely popular notion that one may teach a child anything that will not do him any harm while he is a child, provided he is taught better when he is old enough to understand better. It is not enough to know that it cannot do a child any harm so far as the present is concerned to teach him that God doesn't love little children when they are bad. We must know that it is true. It makes no difference how harmless or even how helpful a teaching may be for present purposes; we are building our children's temples of faith for eternity, and we must see to it that all that goes into them is eternally true.

But one will ask, How can we determine whether a given teaching about God is true or not? That is like asking how a workman can decide whether a given material should go into the structure he is building or not. The careless young apprentice usually glances at a piece of lumber and asks, "Will it do?" The master workman runs his eagle eye over it, applies his foot rule and perhaps his level to see whether it measures up to the requirements, and then asks whether it will stand the

test of time. To determine whether a given teaching should go into a child's temple of faith or not we must follow the master workman; we must carefully scrutinize it and lay the Word of God up against it to see if it measures up to the requirements, and then, if still in doubt, we should lay our children's future up against it and ask whether it will stand the test of time.

Of course some one will want to know how we are to determine whether a given teaching about God is in accordance with the Word of God or not, and in anticipation of this question I am going to give another simple rule. We have glimpses of God all through His Book, but it is not necessary to search the Scriptures through every time we want to decide whether a given teaching about God is Scriptural or not. Nor is it necessary to look for proof texts. Usually all we need to do is to lay the given teaching and the best picture of God that the Bible contains side by side. If they harmonize—if the given teaching about God harmonizes with the best picture, with Jesus, who is “the very image of His substance”—we may accept it as Scriptural; if not we had better let it alone.

With this simple rule in mind it should not take us a moment to decide such a question as, let us say, whether it is true that God is “mad” with little children when they are bad. All we have to do is to lay the story of Jesus alongside of it. Until

we do this we may flounder about miserably. We may, for instance, worry all night over that terrible saying that God is angry with the wicked every day. But the moment we look at Jesus the question is settled. The moment we look into His face we know that whatever that terrible saying may mean it certainly means something very different from the horrible idea that a child gets of God when we tell him that God is "mad" at him when he is bad. Just imagine how the parable of the Prodigal Son would read if Jesus had thought of His Father as a Being who gets in a rage at people when they do wrong.

But if we should still be in doubt, there is another test that will help us to settle the question. If this idea of God is true then it must stand the test of time. Will it stand the test of time? Is this teaching that God is "mad" at people when they are bad something that will work out all right in the years to come? Is it something we should like for John to recall a dozen years from to-day if, after playing the prodigal, he should suddenly come to himself and, with a yearning heart, turn back to seek a Father's forgiveness?

I wonder how many poor prodigals have been kept from going to the Father by the sudden recollection of that awful falsehood that burned its way into their hearts when they were little children—that God is a Being who is always getting into a rage over bad people!

VI

TEACHING JOHN THE TRUTH ABOUT HIMSELF

IF it is essential that little John should grow up with right ideas of God, it is equally important that he should be taught the truth about himself. As a matter of fact his ideas of God, however true they may be, will be of no value to him at all except as they are associated with true ideas of his own nature. No possible good can come of teaching a child that God is a spirit, if we fail to teach him that he himself is a spirit, and allow him to grow up with the idea that he is only a splendid little animal with a thinking machine attachment.

Moreover, if it is not worth while to unfold to John the spiritual nature of God unless we are going to tell him of his own spiritual nature, neither is it worth while to tell him of his own spiritual nature if we are not going to treat him as a spiritual being. There is no conceivable reason why a mother should go to the trouble to teach her child that he is a spiritual being made in the image of his Heavenly Father, if she is going to continue to treat him as only a material being made in his earthly father's image or her own. I emphasize this point just here because we are

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now concerned about the nursery period of John's life, and because there is no place in the world where it is easier to teach one thing and practice another than the nursery. Nowhere is it easier to be a Christian in word and a heathen in deed. What mother would not be horrified at the thought of teaching a catechism that did not put God foremost! And yet how many mothers there are whose daily life is guided by a pagan catechism that puts Baby foremost! How many mothers who are devoutly teaching orthodoxy with their lips are saying by their conduct that the chief end of man (or at any rate of mothers) is to glorify Baby and enjoy him forever!

This would not be so bad perhaps but for the fact that teaching by example often yields results long before our children are old enough for us to begin to teach them by precept. Long before the average child has learned from his mother's lips that there is a God, he has caught the idea from her actions that he is a little god himself! Has she not been bowing down to him ever since he came? Is he not the center of the home? Does not the entire household revolve about him? Were not all the people he knows made to do his bidding? Is not the world his playhouse? Were not all things in heaven and in earth created for his pleasure? Was it not only the other night that he wanted to play with the moon?

One of the most distressing things about life

is that we spend the first five or six years of our children's lives in unconsciously developing in them a little tyrant that is bent on dragging them down to ruin, and then spend the next five or six years in foolishly trying to whip it out of them. We start out with the idea that we are hugging to our hearts a little bundle of love and by and by when we come to our senses we find in our arms a big, unruly creature swollen almost beyond recognition by the tyrant Self, which we have been all the while feeding and coddling within him. And then in our horror over what we have done we lose our senses again and go to beating him. Sometimes we succeed in beating the tyrant out of him, but when we do we usually leave nothing but a broken will, which, as we soon find, is of no more use to the boy than a broken stick. And sometimes we only succeed in breaking him from a few selfish habits and thrusting into his selfish heart a few altruistic ideals, thus preparing the way for a youth of endless strife. He has hardly reached college before he discovers that his new altruistic ideals are at frightful odds with his old selfish ambition, and before the year is out the first great decisive battle for his heart and life is on.

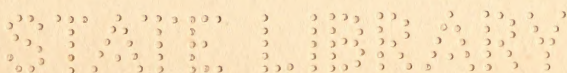
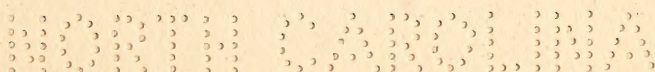
It is a long story, but as a rule we only need to know the beginning to foresee how it will end. Always the issue of a battle for a college boy's life, like that of most other battles, depends upon the

reserves. If his mother has done her work well—if she has faithfully taught him the things of the spirit—the fundamental truths of life, the eternal verities which no power has ever shaken or can shake—if she has interpreted life for him in the light of the life of Christ—in a word, if she has provided him with the reserves of the spirit—these reserves will come to the aid of his spirit and his altruism will win. But if he has been taught nothing but a lot of pious platitudes which are half true and half false, Heaven pity him! If his altruism must stand up alone against his selfish ambition, reinforced as that ambition will be by the selfish, materialistic forces of his college environment, Heaven pity him! His old ambition will win the victory, his vision will be turned inward and fixed upon Self, and he is likely to go through life as blind to God as a mole.

Unquestionably if we don't want John to miss his way to manhood, if we don't want him to go down in defeat upon the very threshold of manhood, we must see to it that he is provided with the fundamental truths concerning his nature and destiny which will be needed to reinforce his better nature in the decisive struggle with his selfish ambition which is sure to come sooner or later.

What are these fundamental truths?

At first, as I have said, we usually treat John as a little animal. An animal is a creature with desires but without a sense of responsibility or obliga-



tion. He is a creature whose aim is to satisfy his desires to the extent of his might. It is not his business to inquire whether there are other creatures with desires, or, if there are, whether they have a right to their desires, or whether they have any rights at all which he is bound to respect. He is a creature to whom the only right is might.

So long as we are treating John as an animal only, or as an animal with a thinking attachment, we are developing his animal selfishness, his animal desires, and his animal doctrine—especially the doctrine that might makes right and the kindred doctrine that the fittest must survive. We don't begin to develop John himself—the real, immortal John—until we begin to treat him as an immortal spirit having a mortal body. Just as soon as we succeed in getting him to think of One whom he cannot see we should undertake to turn his little mind toward the real John whom he cannot see. This may be accomplished at a very early period provided we have not spent the first part of his life in making too much of his body, as when we are continually making a great ado over his bodily comfort and over-indulging his bodily desires. Of course the idea that he is a spiritual being cannot come to him so soon, and one's early efforts in this direction should be devoted to leading him to think of himself as something more than what he sees with his eyes. Already he seems to have a vague idea that his mother is something more than her

soft, warm body. If she closes her eyes and keeps them closed for a little while, a vague fear creeps over him, and he pokes his little fingers into them and tries to open them. If she still keeps them closed his alarm increases and nothing will relieve his mind until she opens them. This fear is not the fear of death; it comes to children who are too young to know anything about death. Apparently the habit of looking into his mother's eyes has developed in the child a vague feeling that she is in some sense within the body, and when her eyes are closed he feels that she is hiding from him. If this is true the alarm that rises when she keeps her eyes closed is the alarm that every little child feels when his mother hides from him and does not come back promptly in answer to his call.

This provides a good starting point, and from this point it should not be difficult to lead John to grasp the truth that he is something more than his body—the body that eats and sleeps and runs and plays; that the real John is the John that's inside—the John who loves; the John who is unhappy when he does wrong; the John who wants to be good. And when he has had his first glimpse of death it should not be difficult to go a step further and teach him that the real John is to live forever. The first time he looks upon a dead bird I should call his attention to this difference between animals and ourselves. I should tell him that when we look upon a bird we see all there is. If a bird is

dead he is all dead—dead through and through—and that is the end. It will never be alive again. And then I should quickly add that with us it is different; that if he should die only his body would die and the real John—the John within, who loves and tries to be good, would still be alive. The real John will live forever.

Later, when he has had time to learn the essential points in which he differs from an animal, I should begin to lay what he has learned about himself alongside of what he has learned about God and help him to see the points of resemblance between himself and God. He cannot see the real John and he cannot see God. He will live forever and God will live forever. He loves and the Father loves. He forgives and the Father forgives. This will suggest his kinship with God and he will begin to think of God as his Father. Then the way will be open to teach him the duties of this relationship, including all that he owes to God as his Father. Of course, one should not wait to teach him all these duties before going further: as soon as possible I shall lead him to discover that God is *our* Father—that He is the Father of everybody else as well as himself, and that therefore we are all brothers and should be kind to one another and help one another as brothers.

By this time the meaning of life will begin to unfold. John is here not to be the center of the universe, not to have his own way, not to make

everybody bow down to him and serve him, not to see how much he can get out of the world, but he is here to live and grow up as a son of the Father and as a brother of men. He is here not to be served but to serve, and by serving to develop to manhood—to the highest manhood; the manhood of a son of God—so that he can dwell in God's kingdom and live with Him and do His will forever.

It is at this point that we have our first real opportunity to fix the direction of John's ambition—one of the most important things we can ever do for him. Many people have an idea that to be a Christian one must crucify one's ambition; but a Christian without ambition would be as worthless as anybody else without ambition. God does not want us to give up our ambition: He simply wants us to turn it round—to turn it from self and fix it upon others. We begin by becoming ambitious for self. If our ambition is permanently fixed in that direction we shall go the way of the utterly selfish and that means ruin. Do you remember that beautiful girl you met a year ago—the girl who impressed you as being the most selfish creature you ever saw? She had a consuming ambition for self. She thought of nothing but her own pleasure and her own interests. She married and a few weeks ago—well, something wonderful happened. She was looking into the face of her new-born baby and suddenly a vision of his future

came to her. And instantly all the ambition in her soul cut loose from self and glued itself to him. And to-day she is the most ambitious little mother in the world. And all her ambition is for him.

That is what God wants to happen to little John before his ambition gets so tightly glued to himself. He wants us to give him a vision of the Father and of his brothers that, instead of being ambitious for himself, he may go through life with a consuming ambition for others. . . .

I wish I could stop just here. I would like to feel that all that is needed in the average American home to make sure that the children will grow up with right ideas of their own nature—with Christ's ideas of their own dignity and worth as human beings—is a mother who will faithfully teach them the truth about themselves both by precept and by practice. But one might as well face the facts as they are. If our children are to grow up with anything like a true conception of the dignity and worth of man, they must grow up in real homes—homes in which high manhood is regarded as the highest and noblest thing this side of God, and in which the development of children to the highest spiritual power according to the pattern of the Perfect Man is the absorbing task of life. And the average American home is not that kind of a home.

I was thinking a little while ago of the greatest man I ever saw in my childhood. He was my

father, of course: Heaven pity the small boy who has seen a greater man than his father. I had just come upon a little pen picture I had made of him several years before. Here it is:

“He was tall and large, and looked very grand. His face was full of dignity and peace. His hair was almost as white as the snowy tie at his throat, and it stood out from his brow like the light that surrounds the angels’ heads. His eyes were blue and there was something in them that made me think of the picture of the prophets in the big Bible on the parlour table. I thought he must be a king.”

I wish you would look at this picture a moment and try to imagine just how and under just what circumstances the man whom it represents was brought up.

It is possible for me to conceive that the magnificent race-horse I saw the other day was produced on a farm where nobody thought anything of horses or paid any more attention to them than was paid to the mules. I can conceive it, but I do not believe it. My belief is that it was produced on a farm where everybody thinks, talks, and dreams of horses, where a horse is considered the most beautiful thing in the world, and where the raising of horses is the supreme business of life.

So it is possible for me to believe that the magnificent specimen of high, spiritual manhood I saw yesterday was brought up in a mere sleeping and eating place, where nobody ever dreamed of

the dignity and worth of man, where neither father nor mother ever had a vision of the Pattern of perfect manhood, where the family discussions at the dinner table revolved around the Darwinian theory of the origin of the species, where father was given to intimating that Johnny was nothing but an improved ape, and mother went around the house with an aching heart because she could not feel sure whether the children really had souls or not, and where Robert, fresh from college, vociferously argued that as man was proven to be made of nothing but a lump of charcoal, a bucket of water, and a pinch of this and that, it was impossible for him to have any higher destiny than a pig.

I can conceive it, but I do not believe it. My belief is that he was brought up in a real home—a home where father and mother thought, talked, and dreamed of a man with as much earnestness as a Kentucky stock raiser thinks, talks and dreams of horses; where a man—a man like the Man of Galilee—was considered the most beautiful thing in the world, and where the divine business of making a man of John was the supreme business of life.

That was the sort of home in which my father was brought up. It was away back yonder in the days of America's smallness and leanness, and it was in a place where there was no wealth except ideals and children, and no maddening pursuits to

make one lose sight of either. In that home there were no ideas of manhood other than those which came from the family Bible, and no hope or dream or ambition other than that of making John a man according to the plans and specifications laid down in that family Bible.

Really, when one comes to think of it, one does not know of any other sort of place where one can hopefully look for that particular kind of man. Now and then, indeed, one happens upon a magnificent specimen of high spiritual manhood that came out of a sleeping and eating place, but we do not expect them to come out of a place of that sort. Usually they come out of a home—a divinely planned and divinely run plant for the making of men.

For the last five or six years we have been going about in a half-frenzied, half-despairing way asking one another: "What's the matter with our civilization? What has caused it to go adrift?" And thus far we have found but one answer. That answer is that our civilization is adrift because we are not big enough to manage it. We have been devoting so much time to the development of the material side of our civilization and so little time to the development of the spiritual side, that we have not the spiritual forces that are necessary to handle the great moral and spiritual problems which our extraordinary material growth has brought upon us. We have been thinking more

of the dignity and worth of battleships than of the dignity and worth of man, and as a consequence we have been turning out more battleships of the first class than men of the first class. This is the secret of our trouble. I do not mean that mankind has degenerated, but I do mean that there is an enormous shortage in the world's supply of manhood, and that this shortage is due to our failure to realize the superiority of men over battleships to meet the demands of our extraordinary material development. I do mean that at a time when we should have been tremendously increasing our output of highly developed spiritual forces—the only forces that could meet the demands alike of the Kingdom of God and our growing civilization—we have been devoting ourselves more and more to the manufacture of highly specialized human machines to run the mere machinery of our civilization.

Our achievements are not going to outstrip our ideals. If we want to help our boys and girls achieve real dignity and worth as spiritual beings, if we want them to achieve their destiny as full grown men and women in the Kingdom of God, we must look after our own ideals. Mothers and fathers must get a new vision of the dignity and worth of man. Fifty years of marvelous scientific achievements have given us wonderful visions of things, and as a people we have exalted the making of things above the making of men. We

need to lift up our eyes. We need to stir our hearts anew with the visions which stirred the hearts of the prophets of old; with that wonderful ancient vision of the Almighty creating man in His own image; with that later vision of the psalmist of man made a little lower than the angels; of that still later and higher vision of the writer of Hebrews who looked forward to a day when men should stand next to God.

In a word, we need to get back to God's Book. All the humiliating and depressing views of man, all the ideas that belittle man, came from outside this Book. All these ideas which assume that John is only a splendid little animal with a thinking-machine attachment came from outside this Book. All the ideas that really exalt John and give him a divine destiny, came from inside this Book.

Let us get back to the Book.

VII

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SUPERNATURAL

IN teaching John about God and about his own spiritual nature we must take care that he does not form wrong ideas of what we are accustomed to call the supernatural. This modern revolt against the supernatural, which John is sure to come upon at college and is likely to come upon at several other places later on in life, is in most cases a revolt, not against the supernatural, but against something that is mistaken for the supernatural. Often it is a revolt against magic. When a boy at college begins to take stock of his early religious beliefs he is amazed to find how many of them are more or less magical or associated with magic. He has magical ideas of the spirit world. He has magical ideas of prayer. He has the most amazing magical ideas of faith a mortal ever dreamed of.

The Bible is full of the supernatural: it is absolutely opposed to the magical. Yet many good people who believe in the Bible are clinging to magic as desperately as did their heathen ancestors. They still put their trust in faith as a magic wand.

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If our wand is only big enough, they tell us, we can overcome all things with it and come out more than conquerors at the end. Is not faith working wonders before our eyes every day? Don't our doctors often heal their patients by just getting them to believe?

Of course faith often works wonders, but I am sorry for these good people who have mistaken the Gospel for a faith cure. We had faith cures in the world before Christ came. The conjurer heals by faith. But the power that saves us is not the power that is in faith, but the infinitely greater power which comes to us because of our faith. The faith that saves is the faith that opens the way for power from above—the faith that makes God's power available for us. If we want our children to be saved we must lead them to put their trust, not in the magical power of their faith, but in the supernatural power of Him who loves them and gave Himself for them.

In other cases the college boy's revolt against the supernatural is due to the popular idea that the supernatural is something contrary to nature—something that runs headlong into nature and smashes it to pieces.

Did you ever talk with a bright young fellow who wanted you to understand that he had departed from the faith of his fathers because, having become a scientific thinker, he could no longer believe in the supernatural? Then you know what

it means to feel like smiling and crying at the same time. When a young man calls himself a scientific thinker and in the next breath exhibits abysmal ignorance, you, of course, want to smile; but you will have to do it quickly, if you are going to do it at all, for almost at the same instant it will occur to you that the poor fellow was led into his pitiable plight, not so much by his own conceit as by the carelessness or ignorance of his early teachers, and then a lump will come into your throat. As for myself, I confess that my desire to cry is usually cut short and I boil over with indignation instead. For I cannot help feeling that when our fine young sons make fools of themselves over a matter of this sort, it is due not so much to our ignorance as our carelessness; and for such carelessness I can find no sort of excuse. I know—and it is a conviction I cannot escape—that if I was half as careful about the religious ideas that go into my boy's head as I am about the food that goes into his stomach, his mind would never become a place for the development of the particular kind of gaseous illusions which cause so many young men to make fools of themselves in this particular way.

When a young man says that he cannot believe in the supernatural he is usually thinking—if he is thinking at all—either of magic or (as in most cases) of something against nature—something that does violence to nature; something wholly unnatural and therefore unreal. And usually it is

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not difficult to trace the latter impression to its source. There are thoughtful mothers who habitually speak of the invisible world, not as another world, but simply as the part of the universe that is out of sight. This helps the child to feel that the invisible is just as real as the visible and it will not be long before it will occur to him that if he only had eyes to see as God sees, the things he would see where now he sees nothing would appear perfectly natural. Such mothers are never guilty of the folly of talking about ghosts, or of spirits flying about in the air, or of little sister, who died last summer, flying with the angels in heaven, or of people who have heard the swish of angels' wings, or of spirits being transparent so that you could see through them, or of spirits doing absurd or amazing things. They know that this sort of talk will almost inevitably associate the supernatural world in John's mind with ghosts or with the land of fairies, and that when he gives up these things, as he must some day, the supernatural or invisible world will immediately begin to grow less real, and by the time he is seventeen it will be almost as difficult for him to believe in a world of spirit as it will be to believe in a world of ghosts or fairies.

Nor do these thoughtful mothers talk about the wonderful miracles of the Bible as they do of the wonderful deeds of the gods in mythology. They know that if they do John is likely to put the miracles of the Bible and the wonders of mythology

away in his mind together, and that when he takes them out in after years to look at them, one is likely to appear quite as absurd in his eyes as the other.

Here is where the trouble usually begins. All mothers may be good, but they are not all good enough to be thoughtful; and mothers are like other people in that when they are not thoughtful they are not careful.

Of course the wise mother's care is not merely of the negative sort. She is not only careful to avoid putting these wrong ideas into John's mind, but she is careful to go through his mind now and then and root out the wrong ideas which nurses and other mildly insane people have put into it. Moreover when she talks of the things of the spirit she helps him to realize the spiritual by speaking of them in the same natural way that she speaks of the things of matter. She is continually aiming to make the invisible as real and natural as the visible. When she would picture God she does not try to make John visualize the Father, whom no man hath seen at any time; she simply pictures Jesus—the perfectly natural Jesus. And so God never becomes a horror or an impossible thing to her boy. No Terrible Giant is sitting upon the clouds above that home; no Dreadful Eye looks down from the sky, straight through the roof and the ceiling, down into John's room, down into the secret places of John's soul.

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And she does not stop here. She is not content to make the invisible real to John; she seeks to make it permanently real by connecting him with it. She not only teaches him that he is something more than a mere animal, but she teaches him that he is something more than an animal with a queer, spooky little thing inside of him called a soul or spirit. She tells him that he himself is a spirit—not an animal having a spirit, but a spirit having an animal body. She makes him realize that the real John cannot be seen with his eyes; just as little sister, who passed out of her body one day in June, cannot be seen with his eyes. And as he grows older and she begins to have little talks with him about life, she does not let him forget that she means not merely this little piece of life that we are living in this world, but also that far bigger part of life that we shall live in the world which we do not see.

If the mother's work is well done John will very likely pass through college without once stumbling over that word "supernatural." But whether he does or not he should not be sent to college without being reminded that by supernatural we mean simply what his Latin tells him it means. It is simply that which is *super*-natural—beyond or above nature. The Christian's God is not a violator of His own laws. He does not throw mountains about and smash things like the gods of mythology. If what we call His miracles seem unnatural it is only because He is working by laws that are beyond

what we see here in nature. If I cut down a forest to build a city in its place, I may appear to the birds who are nesting in the trees a most outrageous violator of nature's laws; but I do not violate nature's laws; I simply make use of laws which are beyond their ken.

This suggests a question. Would it not be well to avoid this subject of miracles altogether? I answer, by no means. I would avoid miracles as a subject of discussion, but I would not avoid stories of miracles. Children are not troubled over things which their elders take as a matter of course, and if you read the stories of miracles to them without taking them out of their place, without pausing to argue about them, without betraying any anxiety over the matter in one way or another, they will do good rather than harm. The important thing is to read them simply as incidents in the narrative—incidents which we cannot understand because God's hand and not man's is in them.

I do not mean to say, however, that all the miracle stories of the Bible should be read to children. Doubtless you have noticed that unbelievers rarely refer to the miracles of Jesus. They poke their fingers scornfully at the miracles about Jesus—His conception and resurrection—but they rarely mention, much less laugh at *His* miracles. The stories which they usually use to unsettle the faith of young Christians are the miracle stories of the Old Testament. I think if I had my boyhood to go

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over again I should be glad if I never heard of some of those Old Testament stories. The stories of the miracles of Jesus read in their place as incidents in His life never give a child a moment's trouble, and if he is given these to the exclusion of all others, he is not likely to have any serious trouble over the subject of miracles in the years to come. All the miracle stories of the Old Testament do not give trouble, but I wish I could have been spared as a child those stories of deeds which seemed so unlike anything that Jesus ever did.

One thing more. To many children the world of spirit is ghostly because they have rarely heard it mentioned except in connection with death. If we want to make what is beyond the veil real and natural and attractive to John, we must learn how to talk with him about it without making any reference to the veil.

VIII

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT PRAYER

IF I were asked what is the most pitiful picture that human eyes ever looked upon I should doubtless recall a certain vision of a poor little baby waif—a tiny castaway who had no mother's eyes into which it might look. But if I should take time to consider it would probably come to me that after all the case of this little castaway is not the most pitiful in the world. It is not so pitiful, for example, as that of a big, full-grown man I know who, in his hour of helplessness, has no Heavenly Father's eyes into which he may look. That man is the world's most wretched castaway.

A baby must look up into his mother's eyes or into the eyes of one who may take the mother's place; denied this privilege it will soon cease to live. A man must look up into the face of God; denied this privilege he is already dead.

This looking up into the face of God is what we call prayer. For prayer, when we come to think of it, is simply conscious helplessness looking up to the source of help. It is not a matter of words. It is true that we are accustomed to say that prayer

is the language of faith; but faith, like love, can speak without the tongues of men or of angels. Prayer is not the mere saying of one's little speech to God on set occasions. It is the very breath of one's life—the outpouring of the heart's desire and the heart's gratitude to the Father. This was the Master's idea. To Jesus prayer was simply a matter of going to the Father and unbosoming oneself to Him: going with all that is in one's heart; going with the impulses or motives which prompt a loving, dutiful child to go to his earthly father; going under the impulse of gratitude to tell Him how thankful we are; going with our burden of sin to ask His forgiveness; going with our tangled problems to get Him to untangle them; going with yearning hearts just to be with Him; going with empty hearts that He may fill them; going with broken hearts that He may heal them; going with all our real needs that He may meet them.

Such was the Master's idea. But is it ours? Is this the idea we are teaching our children to-day?

"I don't believe in God any more," said a little maiden the other day.

Of course the mother was shocked, and she looked it; but the little rebel didn't flinch. "I'm never going to believe in Him any more," she repeated solemnly.

"Mary!" protested mother.

"But I'm not," she persisted, "I'm not 'cause—'cause—you said, if I'd ask God for anything and

said 'for Jesus' sake,' He'd give it to me; and I asked Him for a new doll and said 'for Jesus' sake,' and He didn't give it to me; and I asked Him for ever so many things and said 'for Jesus' sake,' and it didn't do any good."

Not many of us, I am sure, have this little would-be apostate's candour, but I wonder if most of us have not at one time or another shared her unpious feelings. I wonder how often the best of us have been driven to the very verge of atheism by the sudden discovery that something our early teachers taught us about prayer was only a pious fiction. I wonder how many of us are to-day teaching our children the very same things, though we don't believe a word of it. I wonder how many children in present-day homes are going to wake up one of these days when they have gone off to college and say to themselves, as many a college boy has said to himself:

"Pray? What's the good of it? Heaven knows I'd like to believe in it. I'd give anything if I could talk to God about this trouble of mine, but this whole idea of prayer is so absurd. I know I've asked God for a thousand things and I've asked according to the rule, too. I have always said, 'for Jesus' sake,' and I never got anything out of it. And, besides, it's all nonsense. Suppose I had a rich uncle who would do anything in the world I wanted him to do if I'd only go and ask him in mother's name or for mother's sake. What

would become of me? What a greedy, selfish, lazy, good-for-nothing soul I'd be! Why, it would ruin me. And just imagine God running this world on the rich-uncle plan. How long would it take to run it into the ground? Suppose God had really planned everything so that all a fellow had to do when he wanted anything was to go to Him and ask Him for it 'for Jesus' sake.' What would become of the human race? What a lazy, trifling, greedy, good-for-nothing lot we would be! Yet that's just what my Sunday-school teacher always taught me about prayer. 'There's no sense in it!'

If I wanted to convince a teacher of the importance of pedagogy I should not undertake to argue the matter: I should simply show him how Jesus taught the subject of prayer and then remind him of the way the average mother teaches it. The Master's teaching about prayer began with the simple idea of pouring out one's heart to God as one's Father and, as a loving, trusting child, leaving everything to His wisdom and love. It ended with the assurance that if one will go to the Father in the name of Jesus (and therefore in such harmony with Jesus that he can desire of the Father only that which is in harmony with the Father's will), he will receive that which he desires. In other words He began teaching His disciples about prayer in the Primary Department, so to speak, with an idea that every little child could understand, and ended in the Senior Department with an

idea which only a mature Christian can possibly understand. The average mother pursues an exactly opposite course. Instead of first laying in the mind of the child the simple foundation of prayer he begins with the mystical capstone, "in my name," something that few even of the most advanced pupils in the Sunday-school are able to comprehend.

Of course our children should be taught to ask in Jesus' name, but I should never tell John that prayer means to ask God for what one wants, and that if he asks for what he wants in Jesus' name he will get it. To the child mind that means nothing more nor less than if he will say certain words to God he will get what he asks for. Such teaching may suggest to a child the idea of looking out for "number one," but it will never suggest to him the true idea of prayer; it may encourage him to be greedy, but it will never encourage him really to pray. Besides, we don't need to appeal to a child's greed in order to encourage him to pray. I should encourage him to pray, not by telling him that he will get what he asks for, but by setting before him the picture of the Father that Jesus gave His disciples. Even a little child can understand something of what is in a father's heart. Even a little child can understand that if God is his Father—an infinitely good, wise, and loving Father—that settles everything; such a Father can be trusted to do that which is best for His children.

I doubt whether there is anything which the average youth with religious inclinations stumbles over oftener than the puzzling questions about prayer that one so often encounters in the early doubting periods of life. "If God really answers prayer why is it that——? And why doesn't——? And why does——? And why——?" They almost drive him distracted. I don't wonder that so many young fellows at college seek relief in the still, desolate wastes of agnosticism. We usually class these unhappy experiences among the unavoidable brain storms of adolescence, but when we recall our own youth we find ourselves wondering whether most of them are not due to some one's failure or neglect. Many of us, I am sure, could trace nearly all the trouble we ever had about prayer to the failure of our early teachers to build their teaching on the subject of prayer upon the simple foundation idea of fatherhood. If we had been taught from the beginning to think of prayer simply as the outpouring of our hearts to our Father, most of the questions which so often puzzled and distracted us would never have arisen. It would never have occurred to us to ask whether God really answers prayer any more than it would occur to us to-day to ask whether a father answers his children who cry unto him. We should never have thought of asking any of those foolish commercial questions about prayer, such as, "Why does God give so much money to Jones, who never prays, and so little

to Smith, who spends whole hours every day on his knees?" for even as children we know instinctively that there is nothing which digs a wider gulf between a father and his child than the commercial spirit. We know that when a child ceases to go to his father because he is his father and begins to think of him only as the purse-bearer, all heart-to-heart talk between them is at an end. So with all the other questions that have puzzled us; all of them would have vanished the moment we came to realize that prayer is the outpouring of one's heart to one's heavenly Father.

When John is old enough to grasp something of the meaning of the Lord's prayer I should begin to teach him the Master's conception of prayer more in detail. And this teaching I should draw from the Lord's prayer itself. In this prayer we are taught that we must approach God as a child approaches his father; that God is our Father; that God is the Father of our fellow-men as well as of ourselves; that we are to go to Him as one of His children and not as His only child; that all men are children of the same Father, and therefore all men are brethren. And when we go to Him we should be concerned most of all about the Father's interests and the Father's glory. First of all, we should pray that His name may be hallowed, that He may be held in reverence by all men, that His will may be perfectly done here on earth even as it is done in heaven. Then we may ask Him to pro-

vide for our daily needs—to give us for to-day the bread we need for to-day—bread for the body, bread for the mind, bread for the soul. We may not ask Him, as the prodigal son asked his father, to give us at once all that is coming to us. If God should do this for us we would likely do as the prodigal did: we would bundle all together and take a journey into a far country, far away from our Father, and there spend our substance in riotous living. We are to pray for bread, not for cake; that is, for the things we need, not for the things our appetites crave. Then, too, we are to pray for the forgiveness of our sins, remembering while we pray that God will forgive us just as we forgive our fellow-men; that our fellow-men are God's children, even as we are, and if we refuse to forgive His children, God will refuse to forgive us. Then we may ask Him so to guide us that our way may not be too hard for us—that we may not be led into temptations or trials greater than we can bear, but that He may go with us and deliver us from all evil. And in all these petitions we must remember that our real interests are God's interests, that it is His Kingdom for which we are praying, that all power resides in Him and all the glory belongs to Him.

Of course all of these ideas cannot be grasped at a tender age, but as bright a boy as John should have no difficulty in mastering most of them before he is fourteen. The average mother will want to

put off attempting to explain the teaching about bread, but if John does not grasp that idea before he is fourteen we shall have a hard time getting it into his head afterwards. This should be taught in connection with the story of the giving of manna in the wilderness. I should call his attention to the fact that it was bread that God gave the Hebrews in the wilderness—bread and not cake. That is, He provided for their necessities but did not indulge them with luxuries. In other words, He treated them as men, not as babies. He had no idea of indulging them. He had undertaken to lead them across the desert, and He would provide the means, but He would not pamper them. One reason why there is so little of the spirit of praise and gratitude in our hearts is that we look to God for cake rather than bread. We want the sweetmeats of life. We go to Him with our selfish wishes, asking not for the things that we need, but for the things we want; and because we are not grateful for the plain bread that comes to us, many of us are like peevish children, who dash the bread from the mother's hand because it is not cake, or because it is not sugar-coated. Is it any wonder that we are always saying that so many of our prayers are not answered? God is concerned about our little needs, but it is a mistake to think of Him as an indulgent father who is willing to spoil us by giving us the things that are hurtful simply because He would not deny us. He wants

us to be happy to-day, but He is planning for our happiness in the future; and He is not going to provide for to-day's pleasure at the expense of future happiness. It may be well to ask Him to deliver us from a present headache, but after all—and this is something that will appeal to John—is it not time for us to play the man, and if God does not choose to remove the headache, can't we bear it like men and not fret and fume around Him?

A little later I should take up those sayings of Jesus about prayer which are so generally misunderstood. "Ask," said Jesus, "and it shall be given you." Ask; keep on asking; seek; knock; don't be put off. It is the man who asks that receives: it is the man who seeks that finds: it is the man who knocks to whom the door is opened. I do not say that you will always receive what you ask for: God is your Father and He will answer your requests as a father. Make a self case of it. If your son asks bread will you mock him by giving him a stone? If he asks wholesome food, as a fish or an egg, will you give him a serpent or scorpion to poison him? Rather, will you not give him what is best for him regardless of the particular form of his request? And if you as a father, imperfect as you are, choose the best things for your children, how much more will your Father in heaven choose the best things for His children—how much more may you depend upon Him to give

you the best of all gifts—even the Holy Spirit—if you will ask Him!

It is plain that while Jesus here promises that our prayers will be answered, His promise is conditioned upon our praying to God as our Father, and it is just as plain that He means that God will answer us as a father. Do I give my son everything he asks for? Yet if I love him I do not let him ask in vain. I give him that which is best for him. I give him at least as good as he asks. I wouldn't give him a stone if he asked bread. I wouldn't give him a serpent if he asked a fish. And if he didn't know any better than to ask a serpent I wouldn't give it to him.

Then there is that perplexing saying about asking "in my name": "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you."

If this saying means anything it must mean that the promise that is in it is something very different from the promise which some good people insist Jesus made to men. Evidently Jesus never had a thought of creating the impression that God was ready to give men everything they asked for, or everything they asked for if they would only mention His name, which amounts to the same thing. Nobody but an enemy of God could have come into this world and told the people that henceforth God would be subject to their orders, and if they wanted anything all they had to do was to ask for it. Suppose God had given His Son the right to

make the world such a promise and had stood by His promise. What would have happened? Suppose a mother should say to her children one day, "Children, nothing that I do pleases you, and I am going to stop trying to run this home according to my own judgment. Hereafter you can have your own way. I am not going to leave you to yourselves, but I am going to do everything according to your own wishes. Everything you want you shall have. If Johnny wants the house turned upside down he can have it that way. If Baby Kate wants to play with father's razor, she can play with it to her heart's content. If William wants to turn his room into a gambling den for his friends, he can do it. Anything you ask for you shall have." What would happen to that home? What would become of mother's authority? What would become of mother? How long would it take the whole family to go to the dogs?

What would happen to that home would happen to the whole world if God should say to all men, "Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you."

But if Jesus did not promise that, what did He promise? Unquestionably, He promised in a general way that men's prayers should be answered. What men? In another place the promise is to those who "abide" in Him. And what did He mean by prayer? Clearly He did not mean the cry of a beggar to a stranger. He was not thinking of beggars going to strangers; He was thinking of

children going to a father. However unworthy we might be, if we would go to God recognizing Him as our Father, submitting ourselves to His will, trusting to His knowledge of what is best for us, and desiring nothing that did not accord with His will, our prayers would be answered. That is to say, God would answer us as a father; He would not give us what we might wish to have, but He would answer us.

In other words, according to the teaching of Jesus, there is but one way in which a man can get from God everything he desires, and that is to fall in so completely with the Master that when he goes to the Father he will not desire anything that does not harmonize with the Father's will. What He said on this point at the Lord's Supper was that if His disciples would become so completely united with Him that they would have His mind in them and be dominated by His spirit—if they would become one with Him, so that when they went to the Father they would ask in His name—that is, would ask in His spirit as completely as if they were asking in His stead—they would receive what they asked for, because being in perfect harmony with Him they would be in perfect harmony with the Father and would desire nothing that the Father did not wish to grant.

But how can we be sure that we are teaching John the truth about prayer? The answer is simple: if you are in doubt about a particular teaching

place it by the side of this foundation idea of fatherhood. If what we propose to teach is in harmony with Christ's picture of God as our Father we can safely teach it; if it does violence to this picture we should let it alone. With this simple rule before us there is no danger that we shall teach John anything about prayer which he will stumble over in the years to come. Certainly we shall not teach him that God will give him anything he asks for provided he is careful to ask for it in a certain way, or that prayer is a sort of secret button which if touched by the finger of faith will cause all the good things we want to come tumbling down upon our heads. And certainly we shall not forget to remind him that while a loving child goes to his father for things, he goes to him primarily because he loves him and not for what he hopes to get from him.

IX

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT THIS LIFE

WHEN a building collapses there is usually, in addition to the immediate cause, one or more remote causes. The same is true of a collapse of religious faith. The storm that wrecked my neighbour Smith's new house would probably have left it unharmed if the foundations had been secure, and the flurry of controversy among the boys at college last winter which swept away the religious faith of Smith's son Tom in a single night, would probably have had no serious consequences so far as Tom is concerned if it had not been for certain untrustworthy ideas which had somehow found their way into his religious foundations when he was a child.

One of the most dangerous things we can put into the foundations of John's temple of faith is a false view of life. Rather, I should have said, the false view of life, for there is only one. All of our seemingly different false views of life are simply different ways of expressing the one false view, which is that we get from looking at life from the point of view of our selfish interests. College boys are not less human than their parents. I noticed that my neighbour Smith (it is so much easier to

think of one's neighbour at this moment than of oneself) was not seriously disturbed when he was shown that a certain belief which he devoutly held was opposed to the facts of science, but he was terribly shaken up when he discovered that it stood in the way of a certain course he wanted to pursue. And that seems to have been the way with his son Tom. Tom might have listened without concern to any number of arguments against his religious faith so long as they were directed solely at his reason, but when a shrewd unbelieving sophomore appealed to his heart by showing him how his beliefs stood in the way of his view of life and his ambition, he turned white and surrendered without a word.

Herein lies the danger in allowing John to grow up with the selfish view of life: it not only weakens the foundations of his temple of faith, but it develops a selfish ambition which, when over-stimulated by a favourable atmosphere such as one usually finds at college, not only takes a boy out of sympathetic touch with religion, but places him in an attitude of antagonism toward it.

What is this selfish view of life?

Briefly, it is the human view—the view which we naturally acquire when left to ourselves. Ask the average man what this life means or what he was put here for and he will tell you frankly that he doesn't know. But watch him in his daily life and you are likely to get a different answer. His

daily life will probably tell you that in his opinion this life is either all there is of life or, at any rate, the best part of it, and that he was put here to enjoy it. To the average man this world was handed down to men very much as a loving father hands down a big juicy orange to his little son. In other words, he thinks of life as an opportunity to get things—"the good things of this life," he calls them—and to enjoy them to the full. He does not think that it is a great success, for few people get much pleasure out of it, but so far as he can see that was what it was intended for.

Where did we get this idea of life? Evidently we were not born with it. And as those of us who have it have had it ever since we were little children it is plain that we did not get it away from home. We might as well admit that we got it at home. Perhaps we absorbed it from the home atmosphere. Perhaps we reasoned it out from some things mother used to say to us. Possibly we got it from watching father. Possibly nurse had something to do with it. At any rate we got it at home.

It is useless to mince matters. Almost everything a little child sees and hears in the average home tends to develop in him the selfish view of life. At the age of two years little John is the autocrat of the entire household—and, for that matter, of the entire universe. Nobody else has any rights—none at least which he is bound to re-

spect. Even all property rights are his. Big sister's orange is his—if he wants it, and he is pretty sure to want it. If he continues in this environment until he is old enough to think, the result is inevitable: whatever he may be taught, his view of life has already been settled for him by his environment. And unless something happens in the coming years—unless some terrible moral cataclysm shakes him to pieces and forces him to open his eyes—it will remain settled. All through his life he will go on his way with an inverted vision. Instead of looking toward God he will look toward self. And everything will appear accordingly. Black will be white and white black. Where he should see duty he will see only pleasure. Where he should see heroic sacrifice he will see “safety first.” Where he should see the law of God he will see his own desires. Where he should see an opportunity to help another he will see an opportunity to look out for number one. Where he should see, “Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you,” he will see, “Do the other fellow before he has a chance to do you.”

It is impossible to hope that a boy who goes to college with such a vision will hold on to his early religious faith any longer than it will take him to surrender it to the first unbelieving sophomore who holds him up.

Unquestionably if we want to save John from such a fate we must hurry him out of his selfish

environment before he is old enough to think. But that alone will not save him: we must go further and teach him the true view of life.

No thoughtful mother needs to be told how this teaching should begin. At the first outbreak of selfishness she will turn little John squarely round and help him to see that he has taken the wrong road and that she has no more idea of allowing him to take that road than she has of allowing him to take the path to the beehive where he was badly stung the day before. She must make him realize by her look and the tone of her voice that a selfish act is something terrible—like a bee sting or a red-hot stove. And at every subsequent outbreak she will repeat the lesson. Moreover she will seize upon every unselfish act as an opportunity to show her delight in the unselfish spirit and thus will encourage him to do unselfish things. Also she will teach his little hands to give rather than grasp. She will see to it that his first lessons in arithmetic are in subtraction: long before he goes to school she will make him see what a beautiful thing it is to take two nuts from four, giving Mary two and keeping two, and how funny it is to take four plums from four plums, giving them all to the poor little pale-faced boy in the alley and leaving—nothing!

A little later she will teach him to give by serving. She will teach him to do things for others—not only for those who do things for him, but for

all who come within his reach. Thus he will be gradually led to the truth that we are here in this world, not to see how much we can get out of it, but to see how much we can put into it; or to use the Master's happier phrase, to minister, not to be ministered unto.

By and by when John has been at school three or four years, a definite effort should be made to teach him the reason for service and to widen his view of life to embrace other things besides service. Life is service, but it is something more than service. This may be readily brought out by comparing the present life to his school life. We were put here in this world not only to serve—not only to think of others, to love them and to do things for them—but to be made into men. In other words, we were put here for very much the same purpose that John was sent to school. John is at school to be made into a man so that he will be prepared for this life. So, he is here in the world to be made into a man—a much higher type of man—so that he will be prepared for a much higher life—the life which we begin to live with God here and which will continue forever. The time John is spending at school is not life; it is just a little thin section of life, so thin that one can hardly call it a part of life at all. So, the time we spend here in the world is not life, but merely the school time of life—the time in which we get ready for the wonderful life that is to follow.

Of course John is not likely to appreciate this view of life if he does not know how school life is helping to make him into a man, and if he does not know this now is the time to tell him. At school he is studying—exercising his brain—and that is helping his brain to grow. Two or three times a day he must exercise his body, and that is helping his body to grow. Then there is a lot of hard discipline: he is compelled to keep on at work when he is tired, when his eyes hurt, when his head aches; he is compelled to wait and wait and wait; he is compelled to be careful, to be exact, to get at the facts, to do what others want him to do and to leave undone the things he wants to do; and all these things act on his spirit—the real John—very much like his hard tests in the gymnasium act on his body; they help his spirit to grow toward manhood: his spirit is growing more patient, more obedient, more courageous, more indifferent to suffering, more heroic and manly in every way.

When John understands the meaning of his school life it will not be a difficult matter to unfold to him the meaning of the higher and wider school life which embraces the whole of what we call life in this world. If this life is our school time then we were not put here just to have a good time. Of course a fellow gets some fun at school, but we don't go to school to get fun; we go to be made into men—to be made ready for life. At school we

should have just enough fun to rest us and put us in good condition for our work; if we insist upon having more and make a frolic of our study hours our school life will be a failure and our life to follow is likely to be a failure. So in the time we spend in this world getting ready for the higher life we should seek to have just enough fun to rest us and put us in good condition for our work; if we insist upon having fun all the time our life here in the world will be a failure and what follows will be a failure.

It will interest John to know that our training in this school of life is very much like the training he is getting at his own school, only in his school service does not count for much, while in the school of life it is used throughout the course. We are here to be developed to the very highest manhood—like the manhood of the Man of Galilee. If we are to be made into true heroes we must practice heroism along the way, and so all through this life the Great Teacher is continually requiring of us lessons in hard, painful, heroic service. He expects a fellow to do the things that go against the grain: He expects us to risk our lives to save others. That was His way and He expects us to follow in His steps. If a boy is drowning in the river and we run away, we may be sure we are not running in the footsteps of the heroic Christ: if we have the spirit of Christ we shall jump in and try to save the boy's life.

I know there are mothers to whom all this is unspeakably horrible. They cannot bear to think of little John's tender feet treading the road to Calvary. But mothers must face the truth as well as other people. If little John wills to save his life he will lose it: if he is willing to lose it for God and fellow-man he will save it. I can think of nothing about which we act so foolishly as this matter of service as it is related to our own children. We know that heroic sacrifice is the heaven-appointed road for other people's children, but for our own—well, the only path for John's tender feet we can bear to think about is the path of "safety first."

Let us think a moment. Let us see what the unescapable facts of history teach us about this matter. When the great war broke out we were first amazed, then horrified, then unspeakably humiliated. It could hardly have happened at a time when the world was less prepared for it. When the explosion came civilized man was lying in luxury's lap, singing lullabies to himself. He had just been calling himself, for the millionth time, heaven's precious boy, heaven's hero, heaven's darling. He thought he had reached the summit of wisdom and power. And here came this horrible thing laughing in his face, giving the lie to his wisdom, mocking his power, and then with a fiendish jerk, overturning the lap of luxury and sending him sprawling in disgrace upon the floor.

It was not the horrible outburst of savagery that was so bad, though that was bad enough. He had grown so soft and flabby from long lying in that soft warm lap that he would almost faint at the sight of a bleeding finger; and here came rivers of blood drenching the earth. That surely was bad enough; but it was not the worst. The worst was the humiliating upsetting of himself that exposed to the stars his utter nakedness and weakness and failure. That was—but there are no words to express the horror of it. He had thought that he was something. He had thought that he had arrived. He had thought that he was a Christian. He had thought that he was the biggest success there was. And there he lay covered with nothing but shame. And the stars could see through his shame.

That was the way all good people felt at the time; and though long years have passed since that awful day, many of us are feeling that way still. Millions of good people are still talking miserably of the failure of civilization, the failure of Christianity, the failure of democracy, the failure of everything.

Unquestionably something failed, and one of these days I think we shall agree that the thing that failed was nothing less than the race itself. The race came to a place where it was unequal to its job, and it threw up its hands. It had made great boasts of its strength, but when it was called to the

test it had only strength enough to throw up its hands. But it is time we were waking up to the fact that failure does not mean finality. We cannot deny that we failed, but it is something to remember that it was not our first failure, nor our worst. When Jesus came the world had collapsed so completely that hardly anybody was conscious of it. It had practically ceased to struggle. A general dry rot had spread over the nations. There was peace, but it was the peace of listlessness, of utter weariness. Nobody had enough ambition or hope or energy to fight. The race had drunk its cup to the dregs and found nothing worth while. It was dying for want of a new stimulant. No wonder so many in that day turned to the deadly hemlock as the easiest way out.

What was the secret of it all? We have it in one word: "selfishness." It was the cup of selfishness that the race had drunk to the dregs. Mankind had gone the limit of self-seeking and self-indulgence. I wish we could realize what this means. Selfish as we are to-day, I doubt if it is possible for us to fathom the selfishness of the human heart in the ancient world. In that day the supreme duty of man was to look out for self. The idea of putting others ahead of one's self was practically unheard of. Even the Hebrews, after ages of religious teaching, had gotten no further than the idea of putting God ahead of self. They believed in helping the other fellow under certain

limitations, but they never dreamed of putting the other fellow first. Of course there were exceptions to the rule, but it is safe to say that when Jesus came a man who would seriously inconvenience himself for his fellow-men was exceedingly rare.

The race had "tried out" selfishness and had found nothing in it. It had found that he that will save his life shall lose it; and there it had stopped, weary, discouraged, utterly hopeless. Nobody dreamed of trying anything else; nobody knew of anything else to try.

And what was it that started the race off again? What was it that aroused men and women here and there and caused them to spring to their feet with a new light in their eyes and to start off with a shout and a bound to scale the heavenly heights? We call it the touch of Christ, the quickening power of Christ, the love of Christ. But that was not all. We have forgotten that when Christ came and quickened men's spirits He opened their eyes and hearts to a new idea, a new program, a new life. We have forgotten that when He spoke to them He held up before them the most powerful appeal that He has ever made to the best that is in men. We have forgotten that He challenged the heroic spirit that was in them. "You have been living for self," He said, "counting your life dear unto yourself. That is not like the Father; that is not like the Son. That is like the heathen—the

heathen who live with the cattle that perish. There is a better way. Look!" And He pointed them to the star of sacrifice. "He who is bent upon saving his life, like the cattle that perish, shall perish with the cattle. He who refuses to save his life, who is ready to lose it in a heroic passion for God and his fellow-men, shall save it forever." We have forgotten that this thrilling appeal came from the lips of a Hero whose every deed inspired men to be heroic, who was continually throwing Himself into the breach for men, continually giving His life for the life of men.

We have forgotten that. And, by the way, have we also forgotten that so long as the heroic age of Christianity lasted, so long as the followers of Jesus followed their Master in heroic sacrifice, the race advanced steadily toward its divine goal, and that in two hundred years it made more progress toward spiritual manhood than it made in all the millenniums of its history? Have we forgotten that the moment the wonderful passion of the early Christians for Christ and humanity began to decline and they began to look out for themselves like other people—have we forgotten that at that very moment the race began to go down again, that it went down until it lay prone upon the earth, and that it was not until the passion for sacrifice came again to Christ's people that men again struggled to their feet and the Dark^e Ages came to an end?

It is strange how quick we are to forget these things. In every age it is the same story: when selfishness increases, the race goes down; when sacrifice increases, the race goes up. Every time the world has collapsed it has collapsed from selfishness. Where is the man who cannot place his finger upon the bottom secret of our last great world horror? Who does not know that the spirit of heroic sacrifice, which for a time had stood as a wall to hold back the tide of human selfishness that has always threatened the world, had been gradually giving way under the pressure of the materialistic side of our modern civilization, and that the collapse was simply the result of a stupendous flood of selfish ambition suddenly breaking loose with full force upon the world?

One would think that after the last frightful experience the world would have enough. One would think that it had learned its lesson. And yet —

Was it not only yesterday that John's mother, catching a glimpse in the pages of history of that long thin line of immortal heroes who with bare and bleeding feet have been struggling up the Mount of Sacrifice ever since God gave to men a vision of the cross, turned as white as death and, snatching up her boy in her arms, hoarsely vowed through clenched teeth that she would see him die before he should pass that way?

X

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT SACRIFICE

IF we want to place John in that sympathetic attitude toward religion which is so essential to his safety in his first struggles with unbelief, we must help him to fall in love with the ideal of service. And to do this we must emphasize its heroic quality and appeal to his love of heroism. It is impossible to do this effectively if we ourselves are not in love with this ideal and if the heroic appeal does not find a response in our own hearts. Many mothers, it must be admitted, are not interested in heroic service as an ideal for their children. They have been a living sacrifice themselves and they feel that they have suffered enough for themselves and their children too. Moreover, when they think of sacrifice in connection with their children it seems such an unnatural thing—such a senseless thing. It looks like a sentence of servitude which God has arbitrarily imposed upon the world. What has little John done that he should deserve such a sentence?

It is useless to hope that a mother will set her children straight on this matter until she is straight

herself. The truth is a life of heroic sacrifice is in no sense an unnatural life. Sacrifice is not an arbitrarily imposed duty; it is a natural law. It is not an enemy of life; it is a law of life. We are often told that Christianity is unscientific; as a matter of fact it is the only religion that is scientific. It is not Christ's teaching about life that is unscientific; it is the teaching of certain scientists—the kind of scientists who insist that Christianity is unscientific. It was not Christ, but scientists, who taught us to put the preservation of physical life foremost. It was not Christ, but scientists, who taught us that the fittest must survive, and that therefore it is our business to leave the weak to perish and look out for ourselves. It was not Christ, but scientists, who taught us that he that saveth his life shall have it. It was Christ who taught us that he that saveth his life shall lose it. It was Christ who taught us that he who heroically wills to lose his transient physical life in unselfish service shall save his real, essential life. And where is the man with two eyes who does not know that the teaching that accords with the facts, and is therefore scientific, is the teaching of Christ? Who can look at life for a single moment and not see that the law of life is not "safety first," but sacrifice? Who does not see that the human race has never taken a single step forward outside of the path of sacrifice?

Let us think about this matter a moment. All

human progress—what is it but one vast moving picture of sacrifice? Every man you see ascending in life is a hero. He is ascending through pain, through struggle, through heroic self-denial, through serving, through perils, through a thousand deaths—and not for self, but for others. And every man you see descending is a coward. He is running from pain, from struggle, from self-denial, from serving, from peril, from death, not for others, but for self. Every man you see bent on saving his life is losing it. Did I say that all creation is a moving picture of sacrifice? No. I grant that in the kingdom just beneath our feet the big bugs are living by eating the little ones. But we don't belong to the kingdom beneath our feet, and we are not bugs. Among bugs the fittest survive by destroying the weak, but among men the fittest survive by dying for the weak.

Just imagine a home run on what some good people call the scientific plan of "safety first." Imagine mother getting up in the morning and starting out to look after her own comfort. When would a fellow get his breakfast? And who would sew John's buttons on his pants? Suppose mother should spend every day down town looking out for herself. What would become of mother? How long would we keep her enthroned in our hearts? How long would the world continue to honour her? How long would it be before she would lose all the precious things that go to make a mother?

She might gather a world of precious things around her, but what would she be worth? What is a mother worth to herself or anybody else if you take out of her the spirit of self-sacrifice and leave nothing but a selfish seeker of "safety first"?

Take from the mothers and fathers of the world that which makes them ready to suffer and die for others, and the human race would come to an end. It is to mother's sacrifice that under God we owe our lives; it is to mother's and father's heroic sacrifice that under God we owe our daily support. It is to the sacrifice of heroes that we owe our country, our liberty, our religious privileges. It is to the sacrifice of other heroes that we owe our medical knowledge that saves us from a thousand ills. It is to the sacrifice of Christ that we owe eternal life. It is to heroic sacrifice that, under God, we owe everything that is worth while.

All these things we should tell John. We should not be in too big a hurry about it—he must be a big boy before he can begin to understand them—but he should know them all before he goes to college. A little while before he goes I would have a long talk with him, in the course of which I should recall all of them, and then I would try to press the matter home in some such way as follows:

There is a teaching of scientists, and there is a teaching of science. The selfish teaching that has started this generation on a wild run from pain

and sacrifice is indeed the teaching of scientists—rather a certain class of scientists—but it is not the teaching of science. Science does not teach that he that saveth his life shall have it. Science teaches that of rocks, but not of men. Science knows that the moment you rise above the mineral kingdom you come to sacrifice. A rock grows by addition, but a tree grows by subtraction as well as addition. A tree lets go everything that gets in the way of its growth. It may not suffer in its sacrifice—though some scientists think that it does in some degree—but it sacrifices. In the next kingdom (the animal kingdom) science finds the law of sacrifice in fuller force. There is still addition, but there is more subtraction. Animals suffer in their sacrifices; and their suffering is not wholly for self; they suffer for their offspring. In our own physical life science finds still more sacrifice. The physical life of the human race costs more in painful sacrifice than ordinary animal life. When science comes to the spiritual kingdom it has nothing to say. It has only material instruments with which to investigate things, and it can no more grasp the things of the spirit with material instruments than you can pick a thought out of the brain with a hatpin. Science does not profess to know what is the law of life in the spiritual kingdom.

But we are not left in the dark. We have only to open our spiritual eyes and look. According to

science the mineral kingdom is a kingdom of selfishness. Sacrifice appears in the vegetable kingdom, and the higher we go the less selfishness we find and the more sacrifice. Now look into the highest kingdom of all—the Kingdom of God, in which we find love and courage and all the other precious things of the spirit; look with your spiritual eyes, and you will find that selfishness has disappeared and that the law of life is sacrifice. In the life of the spirit we grow, not by addition, but by subtraction; not by saving life, but by losing it.

I would close this talk by citing a case or two. There is the case of—well, let us call him Joe Rand. John knows Joe. Joe is the pride and glory of Jonesville. For the last five years his life has been a life of heroic sacrifice. He seems to have forgotten how to think of himself. He never seems to want anything for himself; all his thoughts are of God and his fellow-men. And every day Joe Rand has been rising in the scale of life. Every day his life has been getting broader and deeper and higher and richer. To-day sacrifice is the law of his life. He despises ease; he despises self-indulgence. He would no more run from pain and sacrifice than he would run from love. Yesterday he jumped into the rapids to save a drowning child, though he knew that his chance of saving his own life was hardly one in ten. For five years Joe Rand has been giving, spending, losing his life for God and his fellow-men, and to-day

he is living a fuller, richer life than any other young man in the village.

Suppose five years ago Joe Rand had chosen the easy path of "safety first"!

A young man in Jonesville chose that path fifty years ago. His father had money and his son "didn't have to." Everybody envied him because he didn't have to—because he could save himself. For fifty years he has been saving himself. He has never been known to get out of a walk except to run from pain or sacrifice. To-day old Jonas Medlin is sitting on a goods box at the corner grocery still engaged in the business of saving himself, and even the village idiot knows how completely he has lost his life in saving it. There is not a single thing in old Jonas's body, mind, soul, name or future that a pauper would reach out his hand for.

XI

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION

MANY a college boy renounces his belief in religion under a misapprehension. When he says he can no longer believe in religion he is not thinking of religion at all; he is only thinking of something he has mistaken for religion. Mothers do not mind trying to teach their children the meaning of goodness, but they throw up their hands at the thought of trying to explain to them the meaning of religion; and as a rule they never try. But mothers have a way of talking of certain acts as religious acts, and children put these things together in their minds and eventually reason out for themselves that these things taken together are what people call religion. Religion, they conclude, means saying one's prayers, reading the Bible, not doing certain things on Sunday, going to Sunday-school and church, being baptized, receiving the communion, giving up certain pleasures and believing certain things the Church teaches. As they grow older more emphasis is laid upon certain of these things than upon others, and by the time they are ready for college

the emphasis is narrowed down to one or two items, girls usually placing it upon certain observances and boys upon beliefs. Many a boy goes to college under the impression that a Christian is one who believes certain impossible things, such as that the whale swallowed Jonah or Jonah swallowed the whale—he's hardly certain which.

After all, what is religion? Are we sure that this matter is perfectly straight in our own minds? What do we mean by religion—the Christian religion?

I think we are ready to agree that it is not a form. It is not a form or system of philosophy. It is not a form of belief. It is not a form of worship. It is not a form of life. But what is it?

Religion is not a form of life, but it is a life. Rather it is life itself—life at its highest and fullest and best. The things which children (and many grown people for that matter) mistake for religion, are usually only helps to religion. Happily we are beginning to think a little more clearly about this matter nowadays. The world is still rather uncertain as to just what religion—the Christian religion—is, but it is no longer in doubt as to some things it is not. People no longer imagine that being a Christian consists in doing certain things that will bring God under obligation to them. Nor do they so easily deceive themselves into the belief that a mere aid to religion—such as church-going—can take the place of religion itself. Many good peo-

ple still look upon ritual observance with reverence, but they are no longer disposed to attach any merit to the saying of one's prayers while one is thinking of everything under the sun except what one is saying. Most of us still believe in listening to sermons and contributing to charity, but we usually think of them as aids to religion, not as religion itself. And some of us have come to realize that some of the things that were once commonly mistaken for religion are not even aids to it. Some, we have learned, are antagonistic to it. As when a man persuades himself that if he has done all that God requires of him on Sunday he can follow his own desires the rest of the week. Or, as when a woman falls under the delusion that because she is very busy working for charity she need not be concerned about the state of her own heart. Or, as when a boy imagines that if he will only go to church in the morning he can go to the worst place he knows about in the afternoon.

But as I have said elsewhere,¹ while the world is slowly sloughing off these medieval ideas, it still clings persistently to the notion that the Christian religion consists of forms and formulas, of certain unusual things which we accept with our minds or speak with our lips or do with our hands. And Christian parents are still persistently encouraging this notion in their children. We still like to do our religious thinking with our backs turned upon

¹ "Our Troublesome Religious Questions" (Revell).

the land of the spirit. We might as well face the fact that this thinking leads us nowhere. We can no more have religion by ignoring the things of the spirit than we can have physical life by ignoring one's dinner. If we are going to worship God at all we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. If we were animals that would not be a matter of any importance. As I have said in the passage to which I have just referred, you can let loose a healthy fawn in a forest adapted to his material needs and the chances are he will develop normally into mature deerhood. But if you let loose a boy in an environment perfectly adapted to his material needs, the chances are he will not develop normally into mature manhood. The fawn is mere matter and he needs nothing but a perfect material environment: give him that and he will follow the law of his nature as closely as he follows his nose. But the boy is something more than matter and he must have something more than a perfect material environment or you can never be sure that he will follow a law of any sort.

There is not a moment in John's life from the time that he is old enough to look into his mother's eyes when we can afford to ignore the fact that he is something which no mere material environment, however perfect it may be, can satisfy. The real John is dependent upon something beyond matter. He is just as much dependent upon it as his body is dependent upon food. If we want the real John

to live forever we must bring him into vital contact with an environment that corresponds with his real nature. In other words, we must bring his spirit into vital contact with spirit. We must bring his spirit into the world of spirit where it can breathe and feed and live and have life more abundantly. This is the supreme problem of parenthood. It is the supreme problem of humanity. It is the problem which Jesus came to help us solve. This is why we have the Christian religion. Jesus did not come into the world under the illusion that men were dying for want of something to believe. He knew that they were dying simply for want of life. What the world needed was not a new creed but an adequate supply of life. The souls of men, suffocated and starving beneath an overwhelming material environment, had no chance to live. They had no more chance to live than helpless babies with wet blankets thrown over their faces. And Jesus came to rescue them and give them life. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

This and this alone is the religion of Jesus: a *life*. It is *the* life—the only full, complete life. The moment little John came into the world his body came into vital contact with a material environment and he began to live a physical life. It was an exceedingly narrow, incomplete life. Later his little mind came into vital contact with an intellectual environment and his life became much

broader. But it was still a mere hair's breadth in comparison with the full life which God intended for him. Now comes Jesus to bring his spirit—the real John, the John with an immortal destiny—into vital contact with a spiritual environment that he may live the life of the spirit. Thus he will achieve the fullness of life, abundant and unending life, the life of a son of God.

How will Christ bring John's spirit into vital contact with a spiritual environment—with the sources and means of the spiritual life?

Let us imagine ourselves seekers after God. We are seeking God as the source of life, as a traveler perishing with thirst seeks a spring along the roadside. We have been told that the surest way to find God is to look for Him who is the express image of His person. And we have given ourselves to the quest of Jesus. We have been reading the Bible daily to find Jesus. We have been looking for Him in the faces and lives of the men and women around us who are said to have His spirit in their hearts. We have been crying out after Him in prayer. We have been thinking of Him by day and dreaming of Him by night and our hearts have yearned for Him as we have gone seeking Him everywhere. And to-day as we are sitting alone in some quiet spot brooding over His words, we suddenly become conscious of Him as a living Being. Before He was like a character in a book; now He is a living, present Person. And

He is speaking to us in our heart. "You have been looking for God," He says gently: "let me show Him to you." And as we sit thinking of Him He becomes so real to us that we can almost see His face; we can almost see the life which He lived in Galilee passing before us; we can almost hear the tones of His voice. And in that face, that life, that voice, we discover God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." For the first time in our lives we realize God; we look into His face and recognize Him as our Father, and then Jesus opens up the way for us and leads us to the Father and brings us into vital contact with Him. Our spirits make contact with the Great Spirit Himself, the Father of our spirits, the Fountain of Eternal life. Our sins are forgiven, our hearts are cleansed, our wills are exchanged for His and we fall into harmony with Him. And having opened our whole being to Him, His spirit possesses us and we begin to live His life. We walk in harmony with His will: we live with Him as sons—loving, obedient sons—live with their father. And having thus made vital contact with Him we find ourselves in vital contact with all the blessed things of the spirit.

And this is not all. When we walk out into the world with God our Father, keeping step with His will, going where He goes, loving what He loves, wishing what He wishes, living His life, we make another wonderful discovery. Having discovered

God we now discover our fellow-men. Having looked into the face of God and recognized in Him our Father, we look into the faces of our fellow-men and recognize in them our brothers. And then—as a natural consequence of walking with God as our Father—we begin to walk with our fellow-men as our brothers. And this—this life which we live with God as our Father and which keeps us in brotherly relations with our fellow-men—this is religion.

We cannot make little John understand what is meant by religion, but he will not have to be a very big boy before he can grasp his true relationship with God and with men, and the moment he does this—the moment that he realizes that God is his Father and that all men are his brothers—I should tell him that this thing of being a son to the Father and a brother to everybody is what we call religion. And often afterwards, in teaching him about his religious duties, I should be careful to remind him that the things which we speak of as religious acts are not religion, but only aids to religion. We go to church not because churchgoing is religion, but because it is one of the means which has been provided to keep our spirits in contact with God, that we may live the life that is religion.

XII

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BIBLE

THE boy who carries to college the idea that religion is chiefly a matter of believing impossible things, also carries with him a childish misconception of the Bible. It is this childish misconception of the Bible that is mainly responsible for his absurd idea that religion is chiefly a matter of believing impossible things. Many a mother has it and it is because she has it that her boy grows up with the idea that religion is something that must be left off with mother's apron strings.

Did you ever look into an unbeliever's life to find out why he has no use for the Word of God? Undoubtedly some people find fault with the Bible for no other reason than that the Bible finds fault with them. That is only human, and it is safe to assume that many people are human. Few of us are given to excesses of enthusiasm over books that expose our meanness more mercilessly than the most merciful of all books. At the same time, it is just as true that there are many people who are both human and just, and that among these

there are some who do not accept the Bible, not because they don't want to believe in it, but because for a very simple reason they cannot believe in it. That reason you will find in the vast gulf that yawns between the ideas of the Bible which they gathered in their childhood and the ideas of the Bible which they found floating about in the world when they had grown up. When a man who is holding on to the branch of a tree on one side of a wide ditch with one hand tries to grasp a branch on the opposite side with the other, the chances for losing both are usually excellent.

Nobody told me when I was a child that God wrote the Bible with a pen made from a quill that He had plucked from an angel's wing. I don't think my early teachers ever mentioned a pen. I am sure my mother did not. But my Sunday-school teacher told me that it was written by the finger of God. And later I heard a preacher say the same thing. And neither the teacher nor the preacher stopped to think. Neither stopped to reflect that if you don't explain what you mean to a child he is going to find an explanation for himself, and usually the wrong one. I knew that God could not put His finger in ink and make such small letters as were in our family Bible, and naturally I hit upon the idea of a pen. And, of course, nothing was easier than to see God sitting on His throne writing in a book in His lap, while the angel from whose wing he had plucked the

quill stood by waiting to carry the book down into the world as soon as it was finished.

But should a teacher be blamed for telling a child that the Bible was written by the finger of God? Yes. Teachers cannot be expected to know everything, but they should know the mind of a child better than to give him a figure of speech and leave him to figure it out for himself. They should know that a figure of speech which sheds a light for the mature mind to walk in often casts a shadow for little children to stumble in. I know that there are ideas which cannot be conveyed without the use of figures of speech, but when I talk to a man I don't leave him to guess whether I am talking literally or figuratively, and it is hardly fair to require more of a child than of his father.

But that was not all. Those early teachers, so far as I can recall, always spoke of God as the author of the Bible, just as they would speak of Dickens as the author of my Christmas book. I did not have a chance to get any other impression except that God was in a more literal sense the maker of the Bible than Dickens was the maker of my Christmas book. I knew that Dickens had the help of a printer, and if there were any *i*'s undotted or *t*'s uncrossed I could blame the printer; but I thought that my Bible was all God's work, and if an *i* remained undotted or a *t* uncrossed God alone was responsible for it. And the way those teachers would repeat those terrible words in Reve-

lation! "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life!" I have hardly gotten over the horror of it yet.

"Our children will learn the stern reality soon enough; let us help them enjoy life while they can," said our good mothers, and with the best of intentions in the world they proceeded to transform child life into a beautiful fairyland. It was always the way with mothers, and I suppose always will be; but it is a pity that so many good mothers overdo the fairyland until they are unable to teach their children the literal truth about any of the most important things of life. That is what is the matter with many a young man and young woman just from college to-day. So many of our young people go to college with a fairyland Bible. No wonder they come back with no Bible at all!

As soon as John is old enough to discover that there are two voices inside of him, one telling him he must and the other telling him he mustn't, he is old enough to understand what is meant by God speaking to us in our hearts. That is the time to begin teaching him about the Bible. I should talk to him about God's love for men and how He wanted people to know Him and how He began to talk to those who would listen, speaking softly in their hearts. What little child has not gone to a quiet spot just at sunset and sat there in the stillness and looked up at the sky? What does a little

child think about at such a moment? Sometimes he can hear God talking so plainly that he answers back out loud! Probably you cannot tell John anything about it that he does not know already, but I should talk to him about it all the same. Then I should tell him how a long time ago God put it into the hearts of good men to tell other people about Him, and how sometimes, speaking softly in their hearts, He moved them to write what He had taught them in a book so that many people might read it and learn about God and about what God wanted them to be and do. And so now and then a holy man, moved by God's Spirit, would write a little book telling what God wanted the people to know, and by and by these little books were gathered up and put together to make one big book, and this collection of little books we call the Bible.

This is the one thing and the only thing we need to teach little children as to what the Bible is. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (A. V.), and as one result we have this Book. That is why we call it God's Book. If we will confine ourselves to this simple teaching the Bible will take its own place in John's mind wholly apart from all fairy stories and myths, and in after years, when he comes to know the Bible itself and the ideas about the Bible which prevail among intelligent believers, the chances are that he will meet with no rude shocks, and his

simple faith will find nothing to stumble over. As a rule, indeed, we do not need to teach more than this even in his early adolescent years. If a boy grows up untrammelled by the foolish fancies of a fairyland Bible and with the simple conviction that the books of the Bible were written by men who were moved by the Holy Spirit, he is not likely to be led astray by any of the illusions which a radical criticism may place in his way. But this simple truth, if it is to become a life conviction, must be pressed home. Let us not forget that. It must be taught over and over by the mother and then by every teacher in every grade in the Sunday-school.

We make a great ado over the false ideas about the Bible which the enemies of Christ are spreading about over the world, but I am more concerned about the false ideas which are being spread by his thoughtless friends, especially those which are finding their way into the heads of our children. One thing a mother must not forget, and that is that like attracts like. If John is well grounded in the truth he is likely to be attracted by the truth. Usually it is the boy who is filled with false ideas at the start that is attracted to false ideas in the years to come.

When John is about ready for college I would take him a little further. I would recall what I had told him about the inspiration of the Bible (that it was written by holy men who were moved

by the Holy Spirit), and then I would go on to tell him that good and wise men differ very widely as to how far this inspiration extends. Some believe that the men who wrote the Book were divinely guided in all that they wrote. Others contend that as God was not interested in teaching men material facts, but was only concerned that they should know the truth—the eternal verities—the things of the spirit, of the Great Spirit and of the spirit of man, things which are eternally true—He only enlightened them as to the truth and left them to write it down in whatever form they might choose. What we may be sure of is that God inspired men to reveal Himself to men and to reveal men to themselves. There is no evidence that God inspired men to write history and literature and science as such. And certainly the Biblical writers were not governed by professional motives. They were not concerned about the material facts of either history or natural history. It was not a matter of any importance to them whether they got their dates right or not: the thing that concerned them was to make a true record of the eternal truths which God had put into their hearts.

Of course John will want to know what evidence we have that the Bible is inspired. A practical and, to our own hearts, the most satisfactory answer is that it inspires; but John will probably want an answer for his intellect as well as his heart, and if his mind is fairly well developed

I would call his attention to a teaching of psychology that may help him. Psychology teaches that we do not create absolutely new ideas, but develop them out of the ideas we already have. How do we get our ideas of spirit and the things of the spirit? We cannot conceive of something that has no sort of resemblance to anything that we have known. Here in this material world we start with ideas of matter. As we develop them we get more ideas of matter. Left to ourselves we could never conceive of anything beyond matter. Not in a million ages could the human mind have formed an idea of spirit. Where did the ideas of spirit—of the things of the spirit, of a world of spirit, of the Great Spirit Himself—which we find in the Bible come from if not from the world of spirit? And who could have broken into this world of matter and revealed them to us but the Great Spirit Himself?

If God had left us to our own thoughts, if He had not spoken to us, if He had not shed light into our darkness, we would have been as the cattle that perish.

I might stop here, but if John should have as good a mind at seventeen as he has to-day I might go on and tell him that the Bible is a progressive revelation. Fortunately for the race this vast treasure of divine truth was not given to our ancestors all in a lump. If it had been it is not probable that the world would have found much use for it. Our

ancestors were but little children in knowledge and it would have been like handing a Bible to a little child to-day and telling him to master it. It would have been worse. It would have been like handing a Bible to a depraved child who was blinded by sin and who did not want to know his duty. Fortunately for the race, God revealed His truths to men one by one as their minds were able to grasp them and their hearts to receive them.

The Bible is a progressive revelation. At every step we have not only a clearer view of God, but of something in God that demands more of us. First, we see Him as our Creator. That suggests that we are under obligation to Him and that we should in some way acknowledge our obligation. Our sense of obligation becomes deeper when we see Him as our Preserver; deeper still when we get a glimpse of His righteousness, His justice, His mercy; deeper still when we get a glimpse of His love.

We don't try to teach our children that they must love those who hate them until we have made them realize that they must love those who love them. So God did not undertake to teach men that they must love their enemies until He had taught them to love their neighbours. The fact that God did not teach men in the early history of the race to love their enemies does not mean that in those days He approved of hating one's enemies; it only means that He revealed His truth

to men as they were able to receive it. It is of the utmost importance that John should bear this in mind at college, especially when he is reading the Old Testament. Whenever we come upon what appear to be imperfect standards among the earlier Biblical writers we must remember that the Bible is a progressive revelation, and instead of accepting these earlier standards we should go further and seek the standards later set up by Christ.

XIII

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SABBATH

MANY young people find it easy to give up their religious faith because religion has never meant anything to them but just one disagreeable don't after another. I wonder how many of us who are Christians are still struggling with a secret grudge which we conceived against God in early childhood because of that Dreadful Day of Don'ts which our mothers taught us to call the Holy Sabbath.

I believe this is about the only grudge the world has against God to-day, but it is big enough to take the place of all the grudges of the past. Greed has always had a deadly grudge against the Sabbath and consequently against the God of the Sabbath, and so long as greed remains in the world we may expect to hear of people who "hate" to see Sunday come. But there are a great many people who hate to see Sunday come that are not victims of greed. They are only victims of ignorance.

Out of every hundred young men and women brought up in Christian homes who have a horror of the Sabbath as the Dreaded Day of Don'ts, prob-



ably more than ninety are victims of ignorance. They were taught wrong. Parents and teachers with the best intentions in the world taught them wrong. They grew up with a picture of the Sabbath in their minds which had no more resemblance to the true Sabbath than a three-year-old child's drawing of a sunset would have to a real sunset. If I had gotten my idea of a sunset from a three-year-old child's picture of a sunset I should hate to see the hour of sunset come. I should never look at a sunset if I could help it.

I cannot speak for all homes, but in nearly all the Christian homes I ever knew the Sabbath was always pictured as a purely arbitrary regulation. It is amazing how easily parents fall into the habit of being arbitrary and of picturing to their children a God who is as arbitrary as themselves. It is so easy to teach that God selected that particular tree in the Garden, or that particular day in the week, or that particular man in the multitude just because He wanted to. It saves one the humiliation of confessing one's ignorance or the trouble of trying to explain things one does not know how to explain. But the moment we begin to teach our children that God does a thing simply because He wants to we begin to rub them the wrong way. We forget that arbitrariness to a child usually means contrariness, and that when we tell him that God set apart the Sabbath because He wanted to, we not only fail to increase his respect for

divine wisdom but we encourage him to feel that God does things without rhyme or reason.

And there is where the trouble usually begins. If you will fathom the heart of a man who is in rebellion against the Sabbath you are almost sure to find that his revolt dates back to a certain Sunday in his early childhood when on listening to an utterly unreasonable statement about the institution of the Sabbath the suspicion suddenly flashed upon him that, "Shucks! there ain't no sense in it."

We usually make another mistake when we undertake to teach our children that God set apart the Sabbath for Himself. There is, of course, a sense in which God set apart the Sabbath for Himself, but that is not easily gotten into a child's head. What we usually get into his head is the idea that God has picked out one slice of cake for Himself and, perhaps, dared everybody to touch it. That leads him at once to set envious eyes upon that particular slice, and that, of course, leads to the discovery that it is the biggest and best slice in the lot. And thus the trouble grows. It is not pleasant to recall just how a boy feels about it, or what he is tempted to say about it when Sunday comes. Why should God have made such glorious Sunday afternoons if He didn't want a fellow to go swimming except on week days?

It is true that nearly everything in our teaching is necessarily arbitrary at the beginning, but the moment John is old enough to understand any-

thing about the Sabbath, and before he is old enough to feel that there is no sense in doing things arbitrarily, we should begin to teach him just what the Sabbath is for. Most children grow up with the feeling that it is of no use at all; with proper teaching they would grow up with the conviction that it is one of the most necessary things in the world.

One need not wait until the child has grasped the idea that he is a spiritual being. He must do this before we can teach him the fundamental truths upon which the Sabbath rests, but there are other truths. As soon as he is able to understand what opportunity means I should begin to make the Sabbath attractive by picturing it as a day of extraordinary opportunities. In a little Sunday talk about the week that has just closed I should bring out the fact that we devoted most of the week to ourselves. Really we were distressingly selfish. We wanted to think of others and do things for others, but there were so many things we wanted to do for ourselves that we almost forgot that there was anybody else to think of. And we almost forgot God. We intended to do some things that God wanted us to do, but we forgot. "Now," I should say, "God knew just how it would be. He saw that people would be so busy working for themselves, or having a good time day after day, that they would lose sight of others and would grow more and more selfish. I wonder if

you did not see so much selfishness last week that you got sick and tired of it and wished that a day would come when everybody would have a good chance to be unselfish. Very well; God saw all this and He provided for it. He wedged in a day between the weeks to give everybody a splendid chance to be unselfish. On that day people would not have to work for themselves and they would have a good chance to think about others and to help others. They would not have any excuse to be selfish. That is one thing the Sabbath is for; it gives us the best chance in the world to be unselfish. People don't have to work for a living on Sunday and so they can think of God and their fellow-men and do a world of good."

As soon as John has thoroughly grasped the idea that he is a spiritual being I should begin to unfold to him God's plan for providing for us, not only for our physical and intellectual natures but for our spiritual natures also. In bringing out this plan care must be taken not to create the impression that God gave us six days in which to look after our bodies and one day to look after our spirits. It is as much our duty to look after our spiritual needs during the week as on Sunday; "but," I should say, "God knew how it would be. He knew how easy it would be for us to forget. We would start out on Monday morning intending to keep our minds upon Him and do all the good we could, but we would have so many things to

look after for our bodies that before the week was over we would almost forget that we were anything but animals. And so God wedged a day in between the weeks to stop us from our work and give us a chance to think. He knew that if we would stop and think we would think of Him, and then we would think of our souls, and then perhaps we would begin to look after our souls as well as our bodies. He did not need to set apart a day to make us think of the needs of our bodies: we can see our bodies and we are not going to forget them; but it was necessary to set apart a day to make us think of the needs of our souls, because we don't see our souls and we are in danger of forgetting all about them.

“Suppose God had not done this! What would have happened? Do you know a man who has forgotten all about his own soul? Suppose everybody was like that man! If we had no Sabbath to remind us of God and of our souls how long would it be before everybody would forget—just like that man?”

Over and over again we must remind John that if God had not wedged in the Sabbath between the weeks to stop men from their work and give them a better chance to think of Him, the very thought of God would have long ago died out of the world. With this truth in his mind he will not grow up with the idea that what this world needs is to close up its churches and spend its week-ends in the

country. He will grow up with the conviction that what it needs is to spend its week-ends with God.

When John is well up in his teens I would have him read the accounts of the Master's deeds of service on the Sabbath and then I would recall what I had taught him about the Sabbath, somewhat as follows:

To the rabbis the Sabbath was a day of don'ts. To Jesus it was a day of opportunity. He regarded it as a day designed for man's highest benefit. It was intended to benefit not only his body by relieving it from the daily grind and giving it a chance to renew itself, and his mind, by loosening it from the sordid thoughts which are so apt to dominate it through the week and giving it a chance to try its wings in a better atmosphere, but it was designed to benefit his spirit. It was God's plan to shut out once a week the noise and strife and worry and care and petty ambitions of daily life—things which serve as a wet blanket to smother our spiritual nature—and to give us a chance to think of God, aspire after God, talk with God—a chance to give our better nature an airing and the food it needs. This last is the chief reason for the Sabbath. It is here to preserve in the world a consciousness of God. God wedges in the Sabbath between the weeks and compels men to stop, and gives them a chance to think of Him. What the world needs more than anything else is

to realize God—to be conscious of God. Everything in the daily grind is pushing the thought of God out of our minds. We simply must find a quiet hour now and then and sit down and grasp and bring back this vanishing thought; we simply must have a Sabbath in which to awaken anew a consciousness of God. For it is only when we are dominated by a consciousness of God that we obey God.

Does this mean that we should spend the Sabbath in a selfish effort to benefit our souls? No. We must give our souls a chance, but we must also help other souls to find a chance. We must follow Jesus. We must remember that God desires mercy, not a mere formal service. The rabbis called for mere forms and not for mercy. Indeed they were themselves unmerciful. And because they neither moved men to show mercy nor showed mercy themselves, He condemned them. "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day."

A religious form of observance is intended to help men, not to hurt them. That is a wrong keeping of the Sabbath that shuts up the door of mercy, or any door through which we may send or receive that which is good. For the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

The highest law of the Sabbath is not the command to abstain from work, but the command to keep the Sabbath holy. If, in the effort to keep the Sabbath holy one must work, as the priests did

in the temple, and as the preacher must do in the pulpit, there is no sin, for the higher law eclipses the lower. The law calls for cessation from labour in order that one may have opportunity to look after his highest interests. Cessation from work alone is not obedience to the law, for we know that an idle brain is the devil's workshop. But while deeds of mercy find a favouring atmosphere on the Sabbath day, we should not allow even these to crowd out the quiet hour which the soul needs to look into its own affairs.

Am I in doubt as to whether I ought to do a certain thing on the Sabbath? The test principle is before me: let me apply that. Is it an act of mercy? Very well: God wants mercy—wants to see me merciful, wants to see me doing merciful deeds—whether it is Sunday or Monday.

And one day before John leaves home I would have his father (or some one who can get very close to his heart) say to him something like this: A young man who is in love with his mother leaves home and goes out into the world to make his living. Everywhere he goes the thought of his mother is uppermost in his mind. Every Saturday night he goes to his room and sits down and writes his mother a long letter. In that sacred hour the image of his mother is freshened in his mind. It helps him to think of her all through the week. And so long as he keeps the image fresh, so long as he is dominated by a consciousness of

his mother, his life is pure. A young man does not go into the haunts of vice with the image of his mother burning brightly before him. But by and by this young man becomes very busy, so busy that when Saturday night comes he pushes his work over the sacred hour—desecrates it, fails to keep it holy—and when the new week begins the image of his mother is almost covered up in his mind and he is no longer dominated by her spirit. It is a sad story—too sad to tell; yet it is no sadder than the story of every young man who has pushed his work or his pleasures over the Sabbath—the day which he once kept sacred to the thought of God.

XIV

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT TEMPTATION

IT is easy to give up anything that promises much and performs little. And that is the kind of religion that many of our boys and girls take with them when they leave home.

“I was told that all I had to do when I was tempted was to ask Jesus to help me and I would come through all right. And I tried it over and over again and I fell every time.”

One could cry over that boy if it were not for thinking of his teachers. What right has a teacher to make a boy such a promise? The Bible does not make it. The Master does not make it. Nobody makes it but thoughtless mothers and thoughtless Sunday-school teachers.

The Bible nowhere tells us that all we have to do if we would overcome temptation is to ask Jesus to help us. On the contrary, it tells us plainly that if we don't do anything else we shall not overcome temptation. Jesus did not overcome the temptation in the wilderness by simply looking to the Father to help Him. For one thing He took

up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and fought the tempter with it. In other words, instead of parleying with the tempter or stopping to think over the matter from the tempter's point of view, which could only have weakened Him, He reinforced His strength with the truth—the Father's point of view—and thus had strength enough to run the enemy off the ground.

If we don't want John to grow up with the idea that religion promises much but performs little, we must see to it that he grows up with a clear understanding of what religion does promise and of what it actually performs, especially in relation to the great crises of life, such as our struggles with temptation.

Little people who really try to be good are disposed to indulge a secret dislike of God for allowing them to be tempted. I should keep an eye open for the sign of this feeling in John, and at the discovery of the first symptom I should begin to unfold to him the Christian teaching in regard to temptation. First of all I should show him that it is a blessed thing that God does allow temptation to come his way. For temptations are tests and a boy can no more grow strong in spirit, if his spirit is not subjected to severe tests, than he can grow strong in body if his muscles are not subjected to severe tests. "Suppose"—I should say to John—"you were alone in the world. And

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suppose one night you had to go to bed without your supper and didn't have a penny for your breakfast and it looked as if you would have to starve. And suppose a man should come to you in the dead of the night and hold up a big fat purse before your eyes and offer to give it to you if you would do something wrong. And suppose in that hour when you were at your weakest you should fight that temptation down to its knees until it had to cry for mercy—do you think you would wake up the next morning a weak boy? Such a fight as that would give you the strength of a giant and it would give you a faith in the Strong One who helped you that would enable you any day to look starvation in the face with a smile. God is going to help us, but God wants to make us strong that we may help ourselves while He is helping us, and not be a mere dead-weight hanging on His arm. And therefore He allows temptations to come to us, and stands by to see us fight them and to see our spirits grow strong. If we do our best—if we fight our hardest—He will help us in the fight and there is not the slightest danger that we shall get whipped. Don't run into temptation—God nowhere promises to come to the help of a reckless boy—but if a temptation comes in your way, roll up your sleeves and fight it with all the strength that God gives you; and God's word for it, you will win. And you will come out of the fight far stronger than when you went in."

When I have satisfied John's mind on this point I should go on to assure him of Christ's help in temptation, and then I should explain what the promise of help means. Christ comes to the help of those who make use of the help He has already provided. "Suppose"—I should say to him—"you should come upon a poor little harmless, half-starved boy down by the river. And suppose you should run home and fill a basket with good things to eat and take them to him. And suppose you should carry a little bucket with you so that he could go to the spring and get some water. And then suppose the boy should sit still and depend upon you to cut up his food and go to the spring for him. What would you do? Very well. Now suppose that silly boy should turn from you to God and ask God to help him. God put it into your heart to carry him that basket of food and He gave him hands with which to cut up his food and legs with which he could run to the spring for water. Do you suppose God would cut up his food and go to the spring for him? Why not? Very well: now look at your own case. God has already provided you with several things to use in overcoming temptation. Suppose a boy should come to you with a package of cigarettes and try to get you to smoke. God has already given you the power to distinguish good from evil, the power to make up your mind, the power to say no and stick to it. He has given you hands to push the

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cigarettes away if that boy should stick them under your nose. He has given you feet to walk away if the boy persists. Very well. Now suppose you didn't make use of your mind or any of the powers which God had given you. Suppose you just stood there and looked at the cigarettes and didn't make up your mind and say no. And suppose when that boy stuck a cigarette under your nose you didn't use your hands to push it away. Suppose you chose to smell it instead. And suppose the boy persisted and you continued to stand there instead of using the power God had given you to walk away. Do you think you could depend upon God to keep you from lighting that cigarette and smoking it? If you refuse to make use of the help God has already given you to resist temptation, have you any right to expect Him to save you from your temptations in spite of yourself? Remember: God helps those who make use of the help He has already given them."

A year or two later I would recall what I had taught him about temptation and then develop the teaching a little further to meet the demands of his growing mind. God wants us to trust Him in every struggle, but He does not want us to trust Him to win the victory for us: He does not intend to let us sit still and win our victories for us: His plan is for us to put ourselves in His hands and to do our best so that He can win the victory through us. If I trust God to win the victory through me

I will not stumble along from day to day at a poor dying rate, waiting for Him to work a miracle of conquest apart from me. I will bring into active service all the forces which He has already gathered together in me for the battle, and I will keep my whole being open to Him that He may reinforce these powers from day to day according to my needs. God has already given me many forces—physical, mental and spiritual—to overcome the temptations which beset me: I will not be so foolish as to set aside all these and look to Him to bring forth some hidden, mysterious power to take their place. I will not refuse to use my eyes, my common sense, my knowledge, my will power, and stand idle before my temptations waiting for Him to supply me with some new form of power that will make fighting easy. Moreover, having opened my heart to Him that He may reinforce me from day to day according to my need, I will act accordingly. If I need courage and have opened my heart to His spirit of courage, I will go forward bravely, believing that He will supply me with all the courage I need.

But there is a wrong way as well as a right way to trust God to win the victory through us. Our Christian teaching is rich in figures of speech that are wonderfully helpful as figures of speech, but immensely harmful when taken literally. We are often told that we are God's tools; that He is a wonderful workman and can do wonders even with

a broken-headed hammer if it will only put itself in His hands. And we are assured that if we poor broken-headed hammers will only put ourselves in His hands He will work wonders with us. All this is true in the sense in which it is intended; but God does not ask us to put ourselves in His hands as broken-headed hammers; He asks us to put ourselves in His hands as men. If I am going to win the victory I must win it, not as a senseless tool in the hands of an expert workman, but rather as a son in the hands of a wise and loving father.

Here is a father standing by his son on the athletic field. The boy is about to start on a race. That boy has had his father's care from the beginning of his life. He owes everything he has under God to his father and he knows it. And his father has promised to help him win the race and he is depending upon him. What will the boy do? Will he set aside all the splendid physical and mental equipment which he has received from his father and stand still and wait for his father to pick him up and run round the race-track and win the victory for him? Will such faith avail him anything? What will he do? If he refuses to make use of all the muscle and knowledge that his father's careful training has given him will his father be able to do anything more for him? And if he does make use of it all will not his father reinforce him for the race in every way he pos-

sibly can? Will he not give him all the further directions he can? Will he not put his hand on his shoulder and whisper a word of courage in his ear and inspire him with his spirit? And when the boy comes round the track again and the father sees that something more is needed, will he not do his best to supply it?

When John is old enough to appreciate the story of Daniel I should have him read the account of Daniel's refusal to eat of the king's meat and drink of his wine, and then I should question him to bring out its practical teachings. "Daniel purposed in his heart." Here is where so many of us miss it. So many of us do not purpose in our hearts. We do wrong not because we make up our minds to do wrong, but because we do not make up our minds at all. It is a secret worth millions to any boy or girl: to do wrong one needs only to let his mind loose; to do right one must grip his mind and force it to take a stand on every matter of morals coming up for a decision. Find a boy who habitually gives way to temptation and you will have found a boy who does not purpose in his heart. But let us make no mistake. We are not saved by resolutions. It is not that he who firmly resolves to do right is able to go and do right in his own strength, but that he who resolves to do right is able to go and do right in the strength of God, for by that resolution he draws God to his side.

We have done a great deal of loose thinking on

this matter of resolutions. One boy lays great stress upon the making of good resolutions, another questions whether they are worth the trouble it takes to make them. Our resolutions cannot save us, we are told; Christ is the only Saviour. True, but pray what can God do with a boy who never makes a resolution—who never purposes in his heart? Of resolutions of the balloon variety—huge, showy, floating gas-bags—we have enough and to spare, but we need not be afraid that we will make too many resolutions of the sort that are full of resolution.

At this point I would have John note carefully the steps by which Daniel overcame. In the first place he started at the beginning. He stopped before he began. He did not indulge in the king's meat and wine a few days with the intention of stopping as soon as it could be done without making a scene. In the second place, he purposed in his heart. He said: "Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I will not touch it." Not many boys start out that way. "I expect to be a temperance man, of course, but as to never taking a glass of wine I do not care to make any rash promises." Such a boy's purpose to be a temperance man is not of the sink-or-swim variety. In the third place, he went to work to carry his purpose into effect. He did not merely adopt his resolution; he performed it. He made arrangements to keep the temptation out of his way. And last,

but not least, God helped him—as God helps every boy who starts like Daniel, with the purpose in his heart.

In John's fifteenth or sixteenth year I should go over with him the story of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. In this story we have the Master's method of dealing with temptation. This method is remarkable not only for its simplicity but for its brevity. A successful method with temptation must be a short one. Time is one of the devil's best friends. If he can only persuade us to stop a while and talk over matters he will feel quite sure of his game; for he is better at an argument than we are—he has been at the business so long—and while he is arguing we forget ourselves, and he has a chance to let fly a tiny dart now and then at the joints of our armour. What is done must be done quickly. Jesus puts it all in one short sentence. He does not argue, He does not parley, He does not suggest any "ifs" or "ands"; He fights him off with the Word of God. In other words, when the devil makes known his will, Jesus instantly thinks of His Father's will and brings it forward. This silences Satan on the matter in hand, if it does not entirely vanquish him.

In this talk with John I would lay special emphasis upon the last temptation, which was the greatest of all. The devil offered Jesus everything He wanted if He would only worship him—in other words, if He would only recognize him as His

Master and do as he wanted Him to do. One of these days John will get so tired of the struggle of life that he will feel as if he would be glad to hire himself out to somebody to do anything he wanted him to do if he would undertake to look after everything for him and supply all his wants. It is a perilous moment. This temptation comes to the poor young man who has gone to the city to find a job, and who has come to his last penny and has just had an offer from a gambling den. It comes to the poor young woman who has lost her position and has walked her shoes out trying to find another. It comes to the business man sorely embarrassed and in desperate need of a little ready cash. Sooner or later it is likely to come to us all. There is one effective weapon to use against this temptation. It is the word of God saying deep down in our hearts, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve."

XV.

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT FIGHTING

SOMETIMES a collapse of religious faith is simply the result of a revulsion of feeling. When a boy goes away from home, whether to study or to work, he usually gets a new vision of manhood, and sometimes this vision awakens within him a profound disgust for the ideas of manhood which were taught him in childhood. If, to be a Christian, is to be the pitiful, spineless creature he has had in his mind ever since he was a little child, then he is done with Christianity.

Many a boy grows up with the idea that to be a Christian is to be like one's aged grandmother. Dear old grandmother sits in her easy chair all the day long, doing duty as a beautiful picture of patience, gentleness and purity, content if she can do her knitting without dropping stitches or her thinking without being unkind to the devil, and never attempting anything more aggressive than an occasional gentle protest against the cruel juvenile custom of sticking pins in flies. When a boy who has carried that picture in his mind for a dozen years suddenly opens his eyes to a vision

of real manhood, he turns from that early picture with a revulsion that amounts to nausea.

One of the most important things we can do for John is to see to it that when he leaves home his idea of a Christian will be such that it will not excite nausea when he compares it with the new vision of manhood that is coming to him.

How can we teach John that to be a true Christian is to be a true man if we must teach him that it is always wrong to fight?

We can't. Mothers have been trying to do it for centuries and I have yet to hear of one who has succeeded. You can no more teach a boy that he can be a pacifist and a man at the same time than you can teach him that he can be a pacifist and a hero at the same time. A true Christian is a true man and a true man is always a hero.

Do I mean that it is our duty to teach John that it is right to fight? No: not necessarily. If little John has been subjected to maltreatment at the hands of a nurse who exploits little children for her own comfort—if his nurse has overwhelmed the little man in his bosom—if she has been telling him terrifying stories until he has become a miserable little coward—he must be taught that he must fight, or he will never become a man. He will never follow in the footsteps of the Perfect Man and will never achieve his divine destiny as a man in the Kingdom of God. But as a rule a

boy does not need to be taught that it is right to fight. As a rule his little spirit is sufficiently aggressive to make him fight on any and all occasions without stopping to ask whether it is right or wrong, and all that we have to do is to turn his aggressive spirit in the right direction.

To do this I should begin at a very early day to make clear in John's mind the difference between his fighting spirit and the ugly spirit which is so often shown in fighting. This can be easily done by questioning him about how he felt when he jumped on a boy who had made faces at him, and contrasting it with the feeling he had when he ran to help a little cripple who was being beaten half to death by a bully. When I have made this clear I should tell him that the feeling which prompted him in the latter instance was something that God put in his bosom to use in His service, and that it is his duty to use it in His service. We have no right to get angry with a boy and fight him for selfish reasons: if we did that our hearts would fill up with hate; but we may and ought to be terribly angry with a big boy who is beating the life out of a little child. That anger is the feeling that moves us to go to the rescue of the oppressed, and God gave it to us for that purpose. With that feeling we can fight an oppressor with all our might until we have rescued the oppressed, and when we are through we shall feel no hatred and our conscience will not condemn us. That was the anger which

the Master felt when He drove the traders out of the temple and when He scorched the rabbis, the oppressors of His people, with words that were far more terrible than whip lashes.

It is time we were doing a little clear thinking about this matter. Mothers are not pacifists, either by nature or by grace. A mother will fight like a tigress for her children, and many a mother will fight with equal courage when her home or community is threatened by a great moral peril. Yet even the bravest of mothers have been known to fall into the most cowardly pacifism when called to face the question of fighting in the lives of their children. They know that the whole Christian life is a warfare, still they tremble at the thought of saying anything which Johnny might construe into an encouragement to fight. What is the secret of this strange attitude? I can trace it to nothing except the fact that for centuries the mothers of the world have been thinking of Christ very much as they have been thinking of their saintly grandmothers. They have been thinking of Him as a beautiful, saintly soul of quiet mien, the one perfect example of purity, patience and tenderness, who was too kind to think ill of the devil and whose spirit never prompts His followers to protest against anything more serious than the cruel juvenile custom of killing flies. Elsewhere¹ I have dwelt somewhat at length upon this strange illusion and have

¹ "What Did Jesus Really Teach About War?" (Revell).

tried to show what a far cry it is from this picture, which is only the Christ of childhood's Sunday afternoon dreams, to the true Christ, who was the most heroic fighter the world has ever known. Perhaps most of us in our childhood conceived this picture of Christ while standing at mother's knee on those quiet Sunday afternoons when she read to us in a voice full of sweet resignation those strange unearthly words: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." It never occurred to us, and it seems never to have occurred to our mothers, that the vision which the prophet saw was Christ when He was submitting to suffering for love's sake, and that at all other times—times when duty was continually calling to Him to speak out, to take sides with the right, to protest against evil, to launch an attack against the oppressors of His people—nobody could lead Him anywhere and no power could keep Him from opening His mouth. Not that He was ever lacking in gentleness or kindness or tender-heartedness. As I have said in the chapter to which I have just referred, I have known some gentle and kind and tender-hearted women who were tremendous fighters. And Jesus, though the gentlest and kindest and tenderest of men, was a tremendous fighter.

This is the picture we must give to John as soon as he is old enough to distinguish between fighting for self, which is something that cats and dogs

do, and fighting for others, which is something the sons of God have been doing ever since this deadly conflict between good and evil started in the world. The Master was not only the world's hero; He was God's hero. He came into the world on the most heroic mission the world has ever heard of. He came to rescue men from the depths of sin and lift them up to the heights of the Kingdom of God where they might achieve their divine destiny as men—sons of God. Everywhere men were in bondage. He found His own people in double bondage. They were not only bound by sin, but they were bound by tyrants. They were held down by their religious masters, the rabbis. The rabbis kept their grip upon the minds of the people and would not let them think. When Jesus came they were leading them about like dumb oxen. And they were leading them in utter darkness.

The Master saw that He could never reach the chains of sin which bound His people's hearts until He had broken the chains of tyranny which bound their minds. And the moment He succeeded in winning the ear of the people He set to work to rescue them from their tyrants. And then the war began. It was bloodless until just toward the end, but all the way through it was one of the fiercest fights the world had ever seen.

Should we teach John that it is right to fight, but only in self-defense? No: not unless we want him to grow up to be a selfish heathen instead of a

self-sacrificing Christian. One might as well teach him at once that self-preservation is the highest law of God, or that selfishness is the supreme virtue; that is what it would amount to in the end. I do not mean that a child should never fight in self-defense: I only mean that there are higher reasons for fighting than self-defense, and that if we rest fighting on the selfish doctrine of self-defense we shall only help to make him a pacifist. A pacifist is one who does not believe in fighting so long as he himself is safe. The average pacifist fights as desperately for himself as anybody else, whether with physical or moral weapons; but he will not lift a finger in defense of either God or man. It was a pacifist who when asked on the witness-stand what he would do if a brute in human form should attack his wife, replied that he would protest—would use moral suasion—but if the brute insisted upon accomplishing his purpose there was nothing more he could do.

I would never tell John that it is right to fight, but only in self-defense. Our highest duty is to others, never to ourselves. The Master rarely took the trouble to defend Himself, but He fought all the way to Calvary for us. And while He had such moral power that He did not need to use physical force, we may be sure that He would not have excused Himself from going to the help of a helpless woman or child on the ground that having protested He could do nothing more.

XVI

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT PEACE

OCCASIONALLY a college boy loses his faith in Christianity for the same reason that many people lost their faith in Christianity during the war. Many boys carry to college their childish habit of jumping at conclusions, and when a boy who is given to jumping at conclusions comes upon facts in his college studies which seem to indicate that Christianity has not made good, he jumps.

Take for example, the case of the boy who was taught in childhood that Christ is the Prince of Peace, that He came to bring peace to the world, and that His religion is a religion of peace, and who grew up with the idea that the peace which Christ promised and the peace which the world is looking for are one and the same. The moment that boy settles down to a thoughtful study of history (and he is not likely to study history thoughtfully until he goes to college), it occurs to him for the first time in his life that history is a record of discord. And soon afterwards the tempter, in the form of a sneering sophomore, comes along to re-

mind him that the history of the Christian era is as full of discord as the era preceding it, and that after nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching the world is no nearer peace than it was before. To a boy who is given to jumping at conclusions there is but one end to such a story. The moment the very natural conclusion that Christianity has not made good in the matter of peace comes in sight he jumps. And when he has reached the conclusion that Christianity has not made good in one thing it is but a short jump to the final conclusion that it has not made good in anything.

I should not tell John that Christ and Christ alone can bring peace to the world until he is old enough to see the difference between Christ's idea of peace and the world's idea of peace. When that time comes I should raise the question why Jesus is called the Prince of Peace, and I should make it plain that He is the Prince of the Peace of God, and that He is not and never has been the prince of the peace of men. Jesus did not place any value upon the kind of peace that the world fights for or tries to buy on the market. He did not come into the world in response to the cries of harassed, nerve-racked men, who would gladly give a hundred millions for the privilege of carrying on their business or seeking their pleasure in their own way, with no one to molest them or make them afraid. He came to bring peace, but not that kind of peace. He had no use for that kind of peace. He knew

that the man who was ready to give a hundred millions for that kind of peace did not need peace, but a sword. He knew more. He knew that a people who could be kept quiet by the gift of a hundred millions of hush money did not need peace, but a sword.

We like to think of the Master as the quietest of saints, with a face of perpetual, ineffable calm, walking slowly through the lily-clad fields of Galilee in the cool of the evening, talking gently to silent, soft-going disciples of the flowers at His feet that neither toil nor spin and the birds above His head that are flying homeward for the night, without a thought of the morrow to disturb their coming sleep. But that sort of thing must have been as rare in the life of Jesus as springs in a desert. There is hardly a man in America to-day who cannot find an opportunity to say his prayers in the quiet of his room, but that opportunity was denied the Master. We have forgotten that Jesus spent His days among noisy Orientals, who never knew what it meant to respect another's privacy; that when He awoke in the morning they were already crowding around and into the place where He slept, all pushing and struggling and talking excitedly or crying aloud to get the Master's attention—some with questions to ask, others with helpless loved ones to be healed. We have forgotten how often His spirit grew so hungry for quiet that He was glad to rise a great while before day and

make His way out into the fields while it was yet dark, that He might have the simple privilege of talking with His Father without the distraction of a babel of voices around Him. We have forgotten those horribly noisy mobs of friends and foes that followed Him wherever He went and whenever He stopped at a house crowded into it until there was hardly room to breathe. The strenuous life of Wall Street that keeps the sanitariums around New York full to overflowing can hardly be more trying to the nerves than were the ceaseless tumult and strain which attended the Master's daily missions of mercy and teaching. Jesus had peace indeed, but it would be hard to find in the history of the world a man whose life experience was more distracting and nerve-racking.

I should call John's attention to these things as soon as he is old enough to understand them and when he is fourteen or fifteen I should recall them and then develop the matter further. It is important that he should know that Jesus not only did not live a life of outward peace, but that He was and is the greatest disturber of the world's peace the world ever saw. He started a disturbance at the very beginning. Even the news of His birth created a panic in Herod's palace, and from the day that He appeared as a teacher until He was crucified as a malefactor the intrenched powers of evil at Jerusalem had no rest. He was indeed the Master of the winds and waves; but while He stilled

raging billows and raging winds and often soothed storm-driven hearts, He must have stirred up a hundred storms for every storm that He stilled. He could hardly enter a home without dividing its inmates and precipitating a conflict between good and evil. Men could not sit still in His presence. They simply had to get up and take one side or the other. And that always meant a disturbance. He was always disturbing the existing order, and He has been disturbing it ever since. We have been saying that the world never saw such a disturbance as our horrible war. Tush! The Prince of Peace has been turning this world—the brains and hearts and homes and schemes and businesses and ideas and ideals of men—upside down and right side up with a ceaseless crash for nineteen centuries.

And yet we call Him the Prince of Peace. Why do we call Him the Prince of Peace? Is it merely a poetic title? Perhaps John will ask us that question. Is Jesus in any real sense the Prince of Peace?

We can answer this question by asking another. If I should go down into the slums and shake things to pieces and make them over again; if I should shake the minds and hearts and dark sleeping places and darker schemes of brutal men to pieces and make them over again; if I should put life where there was death, love where there was hate, purity where there was uncleanness, sacrifice where there was selfishness, law where there was

lawlessness—if I should do all this would you call me an enemy of peace? You might take me for a man of war while the work was going on, while the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, was flashing here and there, and cutting into the lives and consciences of men; but when the strife was over and the melody of grateful praise rose on the evening air in those strangely quiet streets, would you call me an enemy of peace?

What sort of peace may the world hope for from Jesus? This raises another question: What did Jesus come for? When John is sixteen or seventeen I should ask him this question and I should help him to find the answer. We are accustomed to say that Christ came to save sinners, but we have said it so often that it has ceased to have any meaning. It is like the grace many of us say at table. Let us put it differently. Jesus came into the world that every man might have a chance to achieve the end of his being—the end for which God designed him. God had made human beings different from animals and had provided for them a different destiny. They were to rise above the animal level to the heights of manhood—to the high plateaus of the land of the spirit, where having their spirits as well as their bodies developed, they could recognize God as their Father and fall in with His will and walk with Him as His sons, and where they would in consequence recognize their fellow-men as their kin and walk with them

as brothers. God had planned human beings for eternal manhood, but most of them had gotten tied down on the low animal level, and they didn't have a chance. They didn't have a chance. When Jesus came He found them down in the valleys grazing with the cattle that perish. And that was not the worst. They were grazing as cattle tied to a stake. They were tied down by sin. Many were also bound by the chain of ignorance and many by the tyranny of their fellow-men. Jesus came to give them a chance. He came to break off their chains and to put His life into their spirits and then to help them on the way to the heights where they might walk as real men with the Father forever.

That was His task. That is still His task, and John's and ours. If all the followers of Jesus should to-day take their stand with Him and go to work to give every human being a chance to rise out of the depths of sin, ignorance, and tyranny up to manhood in the Kingdom of God, how much peace would you expect this world to have for the next twenty years? Imagine yourself in a godless home. Imagine John undertaking the job of winning the family for Christ. How much peace would you expect to see in your home until the job was done? How much peace would you expect to find in a place where John had taken his stand alone for Christ and all the powers of darkness had in consequence broken loose afresh in Tom

and Harry? Suppose Tom and Harry were as ignorant as they were vile. Suppose they were as tyrannical as they were ignorant and had tied John hand and foot and thrown him into the coal cellar.

Yet there would be peace in that home—peace before the job was done. There would be peace deep down in the heart of John as he lay bound hand and foot in the coal cellar. And there would be peace in your heart, if you had come to John's help, even if those raging tyrants should turn upon you and throw you into the coal cellar.

What kind of peace may we hope for from Jesus? The answer is plain: "My peace I give unto you." To every heart that opens to Him in glad and full surrender to His will He gives His own peace—a peace which no legislation nor preparedness nor disarmament nor education nor culture can either give or take away. And if every heart in the world should open to Him to-day there would be outward peace throughout the world before night. For where one will rules there can be no discord.

But all hearts are not going to open to Him to-day, and until that time comes no power can insure the world against outward discord. It is important that John should remember this. Jesus, the Conqueror, is not going to give up or agree to a compromise for the sake of outward quiet, however hungry His soul and ours may be for quiet. His will is going to be supreme, and it is going to

be supreme forever; and if we want a lasting peace, we must fall in with it. There is no other way. We have cut the angel's song in two, and for years we have been chanting, "On earth peace," as if that were the world's only need. We shall never get it that way. We shall never get it until we have learned to sing that song as the angels sang it: "Glory to God in the highest"; and then, and not until then—"on earth peace."

XVII

TEACHING THE TRUTH ABOUT BROTHERHOOD

ALL boys and girls are visionary, yet there are few things which they have less use for than a religion which holds out hopes that seem to them to be visionary. And to many boys and girls there is nothing more visionary than some of the hopes of Christianity as they have been taught them. Take for example the hope of a time to come when all men will recognize one another as brothers. What can be more absurd?

That is what John is going to say one of these days if he is allowed to grow up with the idea of brotherhood which many mothers are consciously or unconsciously teaching their children.

That is one of the serious difficulties in the way of the solution of our race problem: people cannot accept the doctrine of human brotherhood as it is usually taught. As usually taught brotherhood means comradeship and everybody knows that you cannot bring about comradeship between people who have nothing in common. And so the problem hangs fire.

Jesus did not teach that brotherhood means comradeship or that it demands comradeship. He taught a brotherhood that means kinship. Brotherhood exists wherever men recognize a common Father. The moment a man discovers that all men have a common Father he recognizes his fellow-men as brothers. But he does not recognize them as comrades. Comradeship does not spring from kinship: it springs from likeness. It can exist only between people who have enough qualities and sympathies and tastes and ideals and ideas in common to produce congeniality. No power on earth can force two people who have little or nothing in common into a real comradeship.

I should begin to teach John Christ's doctrine of brotherhood as soon as he has grasped the idea of God's Fatherhood, and when he has grasped the idea of universal human kinship I would try to make clear the distinction between kinship and comradeship. John and his neighbour Tom Smith are brothers, but they are so different in their tastes and sympathies and ideas and ideals—so utterly uncongenial in every way—that it is useless for them to play together as comrades. Plainly it is John's duty to treat Tom as a brother, to feel kindly toward him, to be kind to him, to help him in every way he can, but it is not his duty to spend the day at his house at the risk of misunderstandings that might result in an unbrotherly break between them.

Leaving Tom Smith I should take up the question of John's duty toward little Black Jim in the alley. The Master expects John to look upon Black Jim as his brother, but He does not expect him to treat him as a comrade any more than He expects him to treat Tom Smith as a comrade. Christ does not demand impossible things of John. John can treat Black Jim as a brother, but if they have very little in common nothing can make them comrades.

Christ does not demand that John shall be foolish over Black Jim—that he shall treat him with partiality because he is black—but He does demand that he shall treat him as a brother just as He demands that he shall treat Tom Smith as a brother. And this, we should make plain to John, does not mean that one should treat an unworthy negro as one would treat a worthy negro. We don't treat white people that way. It does not mean that we should treat a negro as a refined brother if he is unrefined, or as a good, honest or congenial brother, if he is not good, honest and congenial; it means to treat him as a brother. If my brother is a social impossibility from my point of view, if we are so different that to attempt anything like real comradeship would do more harm than good, it is not my business to treat him as a comrade. Nevertheless I must treat him as a brother. I must recognize his rights as on a level with my own: I must lend him a helping hand; I

must do my best to see that he has a fair chance and a square deal; I must show him kindness at all times and I must show him real sympathy when he is in need of sympathy. Moreover I must not stand aloof from him. If we have nothing in common socially so that we cannot profitably meet on a social plane, there are other planes. We can come together in industry, perhaps, or we can come together on the plane of Christian service and Christian worship. We can come together wherever we have something in common. So Christ expects us to treat all men—white, black, brown, yellow or red. He does not expect us to do the impossible—to cultivate comradeship where there is nothing in common and therefore no point of contact; He does not expect us to act as if we were socially equal if we are not socially equal; but He does expect us to be fair to one another as brothers; to recognize one another's rights; to be kind to one another; to lend a helping hand; to sympathize with one another and to stand shoulder to shoulder where we have something in common, as on the plane of Christian service, where we have a common Father, a common hope and a common cause.

There will be nothing visionary to John in the Christian teaching that the conquest of the world for Christ would bring about a universal brotherhood if we do not allow him to grow up with the present popular notion that brotherhood means

comradeship. That is, provided he understands that Christianity looks forward to a real brotherhood and not to an artificial brotherhood, and provided he is taught that the only real brotherhood is that which rests upon a common Fatherhood.

There is but one bond that will bind men together. One would have thought that the world would have learned this by this time. And yet we still insist upon trying other bonds to our cost. Only the other day we saw a whole nation swept by the fires of hate and almost drowned in blood as the result of an effort to bind people together on a basis of community of interests. The Russian workingmen thought they were one; but when the revolution came they were as ready to fly at one another's throats as they were to fly at the throats of their avowed enemies.

How strange that after all these centuries of Christianity the world should still ignore the only effective plan that was ever made to bind men together and insist upon trying to bind them together with bonds of its own making!

There is but one thing that will bind men together and that is a sense of brotherhood. And there is but one thing that will awaken a sense of brotherhood and that is a consciousness of a common Father. Men tell us that we don't know about God, but we can come together for service on a basis of brotherhood. That means an artificial brotherhood. That means that we must make-

believe that we are brothers and act as if we are brothers. And that means, of course, that we are going to act like brothers only so long as it is to our interest to make-believe that we are brothers. The moment our artificial brotherhood works against our interests we are going to pull out and the brotherhood will go to pieces.

There is only one brotherhood that is going to last and that is a real brotherhood—the kind of brotherhood that Christianity teaches; a brotherhood that rests upon the belief that men have a common Father. If you can persuade men that they have the same Father they will believe that they are brothers and will act accordingly. If you cannot make them see that they have a common Father, there will be nothing but their common interests to hold them together, and the moment things cease to work for their interests the brotherhood will disappear like the mist before the morning sun.

When John is well up in his teens I should try to introduce him to a more intimate and more helpful brotherhood, which exists inside of the universal brotherhood. While a Christian is drawn toward all men as his brothers he is drawn still closer to fellow Christians, who are brothers in a double sense. All men are our brothers by nature, but Christians are our brothers both by nature and by grace; they are our brothers in Christ. And thus because of this peculiarly

intimate relation we have fellowship with one another; we are comrades. A Christian is a brother to wicked men, but he is a congenial brother—a comrade—to good men.

Christian fellowship means something more than association with men; it means associating with good men on the high plane of spiritual comradeship. If I am lacking in social qualifications I may not be able to live on intimate terms with some people in society and still I may be able to live on intimate terms with them in Christian service. If I have no culture and my neighbour is a man of high culture we cannot become comrades in society; for socially we have nothing in common; but if we are both devoted to Christ we can come together in a most delightful comradeship in work for Christ or in the worship of Christ. I have in mind a very humble uneducated man of no social standing who would be utterly miserable and a stranger in a rich man's parlour, but he is a devoted Christian and in any gathering for Christian work or worship he is a most congenial comrade with devoted Christians of the highest social station. Christian fellowship does not mean congenial association on a social or intellectual plane, for two Christians may have nothing in common socially or intellectually: it means congenial association on a spiritual plane: it means the comradeship of spirits having a common love, a common hope, a common Lord.

Teaching the Truth About Brotherhood 167

One of the happiest discoveries the world ever makes is when it discovers the blessedness of comradeship on a high plane. We start out in life pursuing our own way, each with his gaze so intent upon his own goal that the passing throng appears only as trees walking. People mean nothing to us: they are just people. But one day something terrible happens. A great fire or pestilence sweeps the town, and a terrible earthquake shakes us out of our places and throws us all together against the wall that separates this life from the unseen; and there in the presence of death, when our eyes are no longer glued to our selfish interests, we look into the faces of our struggling, suffering, dying fellow-men and recognize them as our brothers, and we go to work to help them as brothers. Then comes heaven. It is almost worth the cost of a terrible cataclysm to experience the blessedness of working together with our fellow-men to relieve the necessities of other fellow-men who are down. Some people found more joy in rescue work after the San Francisco earthquake than they ever had before. Hundreds of thousands found more joy in Red Cross work in the late war than they had ever known before.

This is just a glimpse of what comes to us in Christian fellowship. And this much I should give to John. Then I should raise the question, Isn't it worth while in choosing one's friends to choose those with whom we can associate on the highest

plane—the plane of Christian comradeship? If we can get so much and give so much where we come together upon the plane of human brotherhood, can we not get and give a great deal more where we come together on the plane of double brotherhood—where we recognize one another not only as brothers in humanity but as brothers in Christ?

XVIII

FURTHER PREPARATION FOR JOHN'S DAYS OF DOUBT

AT first our children take things as they come; then they begin to ask questions about them; by and by they begin to question the things themselves.

I know this is like saying that two and two are four, it is so commonplace; but I wish we could remember it as well. I wish we could remember that this is all perfectly natural in the lives of our own children; that the last age is just as natural as the first, and that when they begin to question things and threaten to become outrageous infidels, it is not necessarily a sign that they are going to the bad. And I wish that we would tell our children as much and help them to remember it as well.

I am sure that we could make the way of the critical years much smoother for John if we would only let him know in his early adolescent years something of what is going on inside of him and something of what is going to happen in the near future. I know a father who one day took his

boy of fourteen into his confidence and told him that he was approaching the age when he would have to be made over. He had been a boy long enough, and he would now have to be made into a man. And then, without alarming the boy, he showed him how, in making over his body, and especially his brain, Nature would have to take things to pieces, and for a good while he would be very much like a machine that was being rebuilt. Things wouldn't be in working order. His perception would not be just right, and perhaps the screws would be out of his judgment, and that wouldn't work right. Therefore, if things began to look different, if things he had always accepted as true should begin to appear absurd, if he felt sure that he was right and all the rest of the world wrong, he should remember what was going on inside himself and sit steady in his boat and hold on to what he had and wait until the work of reconstruction was complete and he had become a man. Then his perception and judgment would be in good working order again, and he could safely decide what was worth keeping and what should be thrown away. That talk helped the boy wonderfully in the trying days that followed. Now and then, of course, he would plunge wildly into a whirlpool of foolishness, and occasionally he would rise in his magnificent self-sufficiency and assert his omniscience with a splendid flourish; but a word from his father would quickly bring him to him-

self again. He would remember that he was in process of reconstruction.

It is all very well for a mother to say that this is a father's business, but if she is tremendously in earnest she will take no chances. If she has not forgotten what her brother went through when he was a boy, and if she has reached the point where she would rather win John permanently for Christ than win a world for herself, she will not be excessively cautious lest she should encroach upon father's prerogatives. She is not going to let her boy stumble through his perilous years in the dark, prerogatives or no prerogatives.

But this is not all that one can do. While the tendency to doubt in youth is a perfectly natural symptom which will pass away with time if we will only give it a chance, the doubting habit, into which so many young people fall, is not a natural symptom, but a disease, a sort of mental measles; and while this also often passes away without doing serious harm, in the absence of proper care, before as well as during the attack, it is not infrequently fatal. Many an attack of doubt which ordinarily would have given no more trouble than an ordinary case of measles has resulted seriously, if not fatally, because of conditions brought about by careless teaching in the years preceding the age of doubt. This suggests that even if, as some of us think, there is nothing we can do to smooth the way for our children through their critical years,

we can at least take pains to avoid adding to their difficulties. We can certainly be careful in our teaching not to give them anything that may turn up as a provoker of doubt when the age of doubt shall arrive.

Take for example the common blunder about prayer to which I have already referred. "If you want anything," said a mother, "just ask God for it, and if you will pray with faith you will get it." She knew that she was not telling the exact truth, but she was only talking to a child, and she thought it would do. Six years afterwards when her child (who had taken his mother at her word and had found that "it didn't work") arrived at the questioning age, he began to laugh at prayer, and then he began to laugh at all his mother had taught him about God and only stopped short of laughing at God. If we are intellectually dishonest we cannot teach our children without robbing them of something, though they may not find it out until they are grown, and we may not find it out at all. Let us continually ask ourselves: "Am I as careful to tell John the exact truth as I would be if I were teaching grown-ups who would know whether it was the truth or not?"

But we must not only avoid telling John things that will not bear examination when he is old enough to examine them for himself; we must do our best to lay the foundation stones of our religion deep down beyond the range of controversy, and

we must be especially careful to give him a conception of religion itself that will lift it entirely out of the sphere of controversy. Doubt feeds on argument. If John enters the age of doubt with the idea that religion is a philosophy or something to argue about, it will not be a week before he will be arguing about it, either with himself or some one else; and whether he is for or against it at the beginning, if the controversy keeps up long enough, he is almost sure to be against it at the end. On the other hand if he has come to think of religion as a life—the only true, immortal, worth-while life—the life which we live by the power of Christ every day and every hour, with God as our Father, Saviour and Guiding Spirit, and in which we recognize our fellow-men as our brothers,—he is not likely to be interested in arguments about religion at all, and therefore not likely to be drawn into them.

Then, too, when we are teaching boys or girls who are about to go off to college, or to other places where the germs of doubt are thicker than they are at home, we can fortify them for their struggle by giving them the benefit of our own experience and especially by warning them against the illusions that came upon us at their age, which are as natural at college as a boy's first love-sickness.

Youth always confuses knowledge with wisdom, and the moment a boy discovers, or imagines he

discovers, that he has knowledge which his elders do not possess, he falls under the illusion that he "knows better" than they do. Old people are "all right," but they "don't know, you know." This, of course, is harmless enough when it goes no further, but in schoolboys and schoolgirls it is likely in the course of time to develop a fancy that the present "knows better" than the past; that while the past was "all right," it was woefully ignorant and mistaken; and this later illusion may prove to be a serious matter. When a boy begins to imagine that only the present age can speak with authority, the past becomes so discredited in his mind that it is as easy for him to doubt the religion of his fathers, along with everything else that the fathers cherished, as it used to be to believe in it.

If this illusion is not developed in our children before they reach college they are sure to fall under it when they get there, if they are not warned against it, and I cannot conceive of anything more important that we can do for them as they are about to leave us than to take them into our confidence and let them know what to expect. I should say to John that one of the first things he will hear at college is that we live in a new and wonderful age; that the world has just emerged from a long, dark night; that we have only begun to see things as they are; that we have only recently come into possession of the necessary equipment for getting at the truth, and I should remind

him that if he takes this sort of thing at its face value, he is likely to come to the conclusion that everything that was conceived in the past was wrong, and that only the present—including the thinking as well as the knowledge and achievements of the present—has any real value.

Then I should remind him that when his father was at college he heard the very same sort of talk, and that his father's father heard it; that all the young generations of the past indulged in it; that they were all just as confident of their superior wisdom as the young generation of the present; and that all such talk means nothing whatever except that to the rising generation the world always looks as if the sun were just rising also. The world has indeed made great progress in many directions, and although we are better equipped to get at material facts to-day than we used to be, when it comes to thinking, to the ability to get at truth, to real wisdom, we have not advanced a hairbreadth beyond the high-water mark of Plato's day. We have indeed a larger number of thinking men and perhaps of wiser men than the world used to have, but the greatest minds of to-day are not one whit greater than the greatest minds of the past. The professor from a foreign university who stands up before our students and with a cool snap of his fingers abolishes the immortality of the soul, may be the most brilliant man in the world, but his university will hardly claim that he has

the thinking power of a Plato or the discernment and wisdom of a Paul.

What shall we do for John if he should come home from college at the end of the first year with the fever of his first attack of doubt upon him?

One thing we must do: we must stand by our word. We told him before he went away that when the tendency to doubt appeared he must remember that it was simply a symptom of a perfectly natural change that was going on in the mind—a symptom as natural as the gosling voice or the fuzz on the upper lip. We told him that if he should discover that he had fallen into the doubting habit he must not imagine that he had gone to the bad; he must remember that it was only a case of mental measles which, with proper care, would soon pass away, and he must not despair. Now let us be as good as our word. If John comes home all broken out with what we call agnosticism, let us not avoid him as a pestilence. Let us not try to meet agnosticism with ostracism. Let us remember that it is only a case of mental measles. We have had it ourselves and there is no reason why we should run from him. And let us not call for a basin and publicly wash our hands of him. Let us not even confide to our neighbours how sadly we have been disappointed in him. And when he begins to exude his agnostic nonsense around us let us not shake our heads and sigh and tell him what his poor dead father would think if

he only knew. Above all let us not call him a fool or an idiot, or hint that there is something radically wrong with him.

There is nothing radically wrong with John. True, he is not well; but there is no organic disease; he has simply been exposed to a passing contagion and he has caught it. Possibly he has caught cold on top of it. Perhaps some people have already been treating him frigidly and he has had a relapse. That is bad, but it does not make his case hopeless. John is simply a victim of mental measles, and although it will do harm rather than good to tell him so now that he has it, we should take him in hand and treat him accordingly. We should treat him as our mothers treated us when we caught the measles—the other kind—in our childhood. Surely we have not forgotten the warm room and the flaxseed tea and mother's infinite patience. Instead of leaving John out in the world to catch cold, let us make a place for him in our hearts and keep him warm with our love.

This means, of course, that we must make haste to renew the old spiritual intimacy, and having renewed it, we must retain it regardless of cost. This is neither as easy nor as difficult as we sometimes imagine. One does not have to be a diplomat, but one does need to exercise an ordinary amount of common sense. If John comes home full of doubt he will be proud of his distinction and he will want us to notice it. He will expect us to

lift our hands in holy horror, but he is quite sure that we must sooner or later burn incense to his wisdom. He will want us to do both. We must be careful not to do either. We must not do anything that will help him enjoy his distinction. If he sees that we are conscious of his new rôle it will not only gratify him and make him think more of it and strengthen his determination to hold on to it, but it will also encourage the feeling that he no longer has anything in common with us. And that will be fatal. If we betray the slightest consciousness that he is different from us he will inevitably begin to drift away from us, just as Susie begins to drift away from Mary the moment Mary betrays the consciousness that Susie's year at Mrs. Knickerbocker's fashionable school has opened up a vast social chasm between them.

Not only must we be careful not to recognize John's coveted distinction as a doubter or an agnostic, but we must steadfastly refuse to admit that there is anything between us to argue about. This is important not only because, as I have said, doubt feeds on argument, but because when controversy comes in at the door, loving intimacy usually flies out at the window. It is true that there are friends of many years' standing who often get into an argument for the sheer love of it and no harm ever results, but the bond of loving intimacy that binds a boy to his mother is sometimes as brittle as china, and a youth in an argument sometimes smashes

things as badly as a bull in a china shop. I know the first thing we shall want to do, if we decide to hold on to John, will be to set him right. We shall think it important to answer his arguments and show him how little he knows. But we cannot answer his arguments—at least, not to his satisfaction. All that our arguments will do will be to confirm him in his own beliefs, or unbeliefs. And we cannot show him how little he knows; that is a long and painful process which the world will have to attend to later. What we need to do, and certainly the only thing we need to do at the beginning, is to renew the old loving intimacy. We must get hold of John's heart so that we can walk with him as we used to do; so that he can breathe continually the warm atmosphere of our love; so that he will have always before his eyes the ideals upon which our own gaze is fixed; so that the unconscious influences for Christ which—if we indeed belong to Christ—are continually going out of our lives, our eyes, our hand-touch, the very tones we use in speech, will find their way into his heart, so that we may have opportunities now and then to direct his mind, without argument, back into the old channels of truth which he has forgotten, and finally, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, back to the waiting Christ.

When John wants to argue—and he will always want to argue—we must kindly but firmly refuse to indulge him. Argument, we must remind our-

selves, is for the mature; for minds from which the fever of youth has passed, leaving the vision clear and undistorted and the hands steady enough accurately to weigh one thing against another. We must remind ourselves that in our own youth we never examined the arguments of an opponent except to find flaws in them, and that every argument only set us to work to find an argument to oppose it, and thus instead of leading us to the truth only led us to intrench ourselves in the position we had taken. And so we must tell John again that our religion is not a philosophy, not a series of questions to dispute over, but a life, a life like that which Jesus lived, a life which all men, including unbelievers, have agreed to be above argument; and we must say that instead of arguing about this life we prefer to show it to him. And then we must show it to him—this wonderful Christ-life which men live by the power of Christ with God as their Father, Saviour and Guiding Spirit, and which enables them to live with their fellow-men as brothers. Whenever it comes into view, in our homes, on the street, in unexpected places, in the books we are reading together, we must quietly show it to him. We don't offer an argument in the laboratory when we can offer a demonstration. How foolish that we should offer John, fresh from his college laboratory, an argument for Christianity when we can point him to a demonstration!

I believe that I have suggested about all that we

really need to do. Occasionally there will be a peculiar case, but most of the cases which we imagine are peculiar will yield to this simple treatment sooner or later. If the attack does not pass off by the time John gets through college it may be wise to attempt a treatment of his intellectual difficulties; but this has its dangers and I should do nothing without first consulting my pastor or some one else who has had long experience in such matters.

But in all probability John will not need it. If we are indeed abiding in Christ and He in us and we are walking with John arm in arm and heart to heart, John is so near Christ that it is hard to see how his fever can keep up very long.

XIX

ONE THING MORE

THUS far my message has been a very selfish one. I have talked of John as if there was but one John in the world or, at any rate, but one in whom a mother is interested. Now I must go a step further or nothing that I have said will be worth while. I must go further and say that it is not worth while to attempt to teach John anything about religion at all if we are going to think of him as the only John in the world in whom we are interested. We can teach him arithmetic on that basis, but not religion. It is utterly impossible for a human being to see a religious truth in an atmosphere of selfishness. If we want to do our best for our John we must have a vision that will take in other people's Johns; we must have a love for him that will overflow upon other people's Johns. I never knew a successful teacher of boys who loved only her own boys. I never knew a successful teacher of boys who did not love almost everything that looked like a boy. We are not to neglect our own children in our concern for the souls of other people's children, but we

should not forget that the surest way to save our children—to bring them to the highest manhood in the Kingdom of God—is to kindle and keep alive in our hearts a great flame of desire for the salvation of every child that comes into the world. The more deeply interested we become in the work that is being done in other people's homes for their children and the more we try to do for them ourselves, the more likely we are to do the best things in the wisest way for our own children. The work we do for other people's children not only makes us stronger and wiser for the work we are trying to do for our own, but it helps to keep our hearts in a flame of love and enthusiasm, without which we shall not be able to give to our own the best that is in us.

Every mother should take the time now and then to stir up her interest in her neighbours' homes as homes—that is, as divinely appointed plants for the making of men and women for the Kingdom of God. The home is something which most of us nowadays take for granted. We know our next door neighbour's home as an eating or sleeping place, but few of us know anything about it as a home. Many a Christian home has been gradually converted into a pagan sleeping place without anybody finding it out. Asking the average man about his own home is like asking the head (or foot) of the table whether he has said grace; really he cannot remember.

In the days of our fathers there were no two ideas about the home. The home was a place where men were made. (By men I mean human beings, regardless of sex, brought to the full stature of real manhood.) It was not always used for that purpose, but nobody ever dreamed that it was for any other purpose. Our fathers had few possessions besides children, and they had time to think a great deal about them. And the more they thought about them the more they treasured them. They dreamed great dreams of their children's future—dreams that thrilled them and sent them forth to work their fingers to the bone that their sons and daughters might have the best possible opportunity to achieve their divine destiny. No wonder they thought that the biggest thing this side of God was a man and that the biggest business in the world was the making of men. No wonder they felt that the secret of a nation's power is its manhood and that the best thing a man could do for his country and his God was to make a man of his son—a man of spiritual power adequate to his country's needs and the demands of the Kingdom of God.

One does not need to be old to recall the day when every American had a passion for manhood. Even men who had fallen short of manhood themselves were ambitious that their children might achieve it and believed that it was their duty to see that they achieved it. If they did not do their

duty it was not because they did not know better. They never lost their sense of parental obligation.

Even as late as a quarter of a century ago it was unusual to meet an American who did not have a fairly developed sense of obligation for the souls of his children. Among mothers this sense was almost universal. In those days mothers simply could not rid themselves of the idea that their children had souls—souls that needed looking after. And in those days it was quite as unusual to meet an American who dared to question the Christian idea of a home. Few people cared to think of one's home as anything less than a divine institution established for the purpose of helping the race to achieve its divine destiny. And perhaps there were few who did not at one time or another make some sort of a show of using their home for the purpose for which it was designed. Often it must be admitted it was a very poor show. Sometimes it was only a matter of keeping a big Bible on the parlour table and seeing to it that everybody said his prayers. But it showed that the sense of obligation was sufficiently alive to make one feel uncomfortable unless one did something. Respectable people had a hard time ridding themselves of the old-fashioned idea that parenthood means something more than bringing children into the world and giving their bodies and minds a chance. And naturally they found it quite as difficult to cast

out the equally primitive notion that the home is a divine institution and not, as so many moderns have begun to believe, that crudest of human inventions—a boarding house.

But times have changed and people's ideas have changed with them. Nowadays no one thinks of measuring his wealth in children. We have other treasures and other things to think about. We are still given to saying that we wouldn't take a million dollars for John, but we don't mean anything in particular by it. And of course we still find time to think of our children, but we begin with their bodies, and before we get very far our time is out. Only once in a while we do get as far as John's divine destiny. Usually we are glad to get as far as his career. And a career is such a sordid thing. It is hard to get properly thrilled over John's future as an electrical engineer.

Then, too, this modern craze for making things has shoved the world of spirit so far away from us that we have almost lost all consciousness of its existence. Where once a mother spent an hour every day developing her daughter's soul she now spends every hour in the day in material pursuits with an absorption that effectually keeps her from remembering that her daughter has a soul to develop. The fact that the modern mother can soothe her conscience with the reflection that she is wearing herself out for her daughter does not alter the fact that she is no longer wearing herself out

for her daughter's soul. How many women do you know that are absorbed in the business of lifting their children out of the depths of sheer animalism up to the high plateaus of the land of the spirit where human beings can achieve their destiny as men in the Kingdom of God? How many women do you know whose program for the spiritual development of their children extends beyond sending them to Sunday-school, seeing that they say their prayers, and washing out their mouths when they tell a lie? And as for fathers—but let us not talk about fathers.

It is easier to discuss the home than to shed light upon it. But the easier way never solves a problem. It cannot solve it for the reason that you cannot solve a problem in the dark. We have had sermons on family government without end, and the family is still ungoverned. We have repeated the usual panegyric on the neglected family altar a million times, and in the meantime a million family altars have disappeared from the face of the earth. Plainly the thing that is needed is not talk but light. The searchlight of the truth must be turned upon people's homes. It must be turned upon their home ideals. It must be turned upon their children's souls. People must be made to see what their children really are. Say what one will, the average man does not choose to remember what his children are. He does not care to think of them as spirits. True, he has his dreams in which they

appear to him as spirits, but in his daily thoughts—when he is thinking business—he prefers to think of them as machines built to make things. He likes to speculate upon how much physical and mental power John can generate. He is not interested in him as a spiritual potentiality. There is something so unpractical about a spirit! Even the average woman does not like to think of her children as spiritual potentialities. Half a century ago good women prayed that God might honour their sons by calling them into the ministry. To-day only grandmothers want John to be a preacher. Mother wants John to be good, of course, but—a preacher! Heavens! How would he ever make any money?

It is useless to offer advice about family government to people whose eyes are glued to materialistic ideals. We must look to the enlightening Spirit for help and then mercilessly turn on the light. I said we. I don't mean the preachers; the call is to every man and woman who has any light to turn on. It is especially for those of us who have real homes of our own. We know how to start a movement to provide homes for the homeless. There are millions of well-housed Americans who are homeless. Let us start a movement to help these unfortunates. Let us—each in his own sphere of influence and in his own way—agitate this tragic subject of America's homelessness. Let us magnify the home as a plant for making men.

Let us revive America's old-time passion for making a man out of John.

There is no other solution to the problem. So long as my neighbour Jones thinks of his John as nothing but a magnificent little human animal with a thinking attachment, he will never have a home. I must help him to see John in the light of the truth. No power on earth can make Jones turn his house into a home until he looks into John's face and catches a glimpse of the divine image or of a divine destiny. Somebody must help him catch that glimpse, and I who have a John of my own am the one to do it. What can I hope to do for my John if I have so little concern for his John that I don't care whether the boy's soul is growing up in a home or starving to death in a mere boarding house?

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I should be happy if I could close this book with the consciousness that I had left in its pages something that might reveal how deeply I feel about this whole matter. For after all, the problem of bringing up John is largely a matter of conviction, and I can hardly hope to awaken in others a deeper conviction than I am able to express. I say it is largely a matter of conviction because all the reasons we can give for the tragical blunders of this generation over its problem of making men are simply confessions of our lack of conviction.

When we say that the present world-wide shortage in high manhood is due to the fact that for fifty years or more we have been more interested in the scientific business of making things than in the divine business of making men, we are only confessing that during this period we have had deeper convictions about the making of things than we have had about the making of men. We have been more impressed with the need of battleships of the first class than with the need of men of the first class. So with our explanation that we have failed to solve the problem of bringing up John because we have been trying to save America by devoting ourselves to our big national problems instead of facing our big home problems, from which all of our really big national problems have sprung. If our convictions about bringing up John were as deep as our convictions about the labour problem we should soon have no labour problem, for we would develop a race of men who would have sufficient spiritual vision and power to settle their difficulties like men, instead of vainly trying to fight them out like cats and dogs. And so with our explanation that our failure to provide our children with religious ideas which would stand the test of the coming years is due to our own thoughtlessness. Thoughtlessness is but another word for lack of conviction. It is because of our lack of conviction about the business of bringing up John that we do our work so absent-mindedly that the stepping-

stones which we build for him along the way turn out to be stumbling-stones.

We never begin to solve a serious problem until we have come to feel very seriously about it, and we shall never solve this problem of helping our children to achieve their destiny as sons of God until our hearts are on fire with the conviction that it is the noblest task and the most pressing obligation that God has ever laid upon us. We may play with it, we may fumble with it, but we shall not solve it.

How shall we acquire this conviction?

There is but one answer. The secret of conviction is vision. We must have a vision of God and in the light of His countenance we must have a vision of John. In the light of His countenance we must look down into John's face and discover a spirit akin to God—a spirit placed in our care to be led to God.

And how shall we get this vision?

To this also there is but one answer. We must pay the price. We must turn our backs upon the things that are blinding us to God. We must turn our backs upon this horrible whirlpool in the stream of life where men and women are struggling over their eyes in a frenzy of greed and selfish ambition, ever striving and fighting for things and more things and still more things—we must turn our backs upon this blinding maelstrom and seek a place in life where we can open our eyes



and where God will have a fair chance to reveal Himself to us. We must rescue our souls from this modern world-madness for money-getting and social-climbing and joy-riding, this insatiable craving for the glare of footlights, this everlasting midnight revelry in a crazing maze of sensuous charms and seductive gowns and blazing jewels and imbecile hilarity—things which have narrowed down our vision to a horizon of dense dollars that goes no farther than the city limits,—we must rescue our souls from these things and go back to the simpler life, such as we lived in childhood's home, where the horizon reaches far out into the land of the spirit, where we can hear the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the evening, and where at the sound of His voice we can take John by the hand and go to meet Him, with clean hearts and unblushing faces.

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